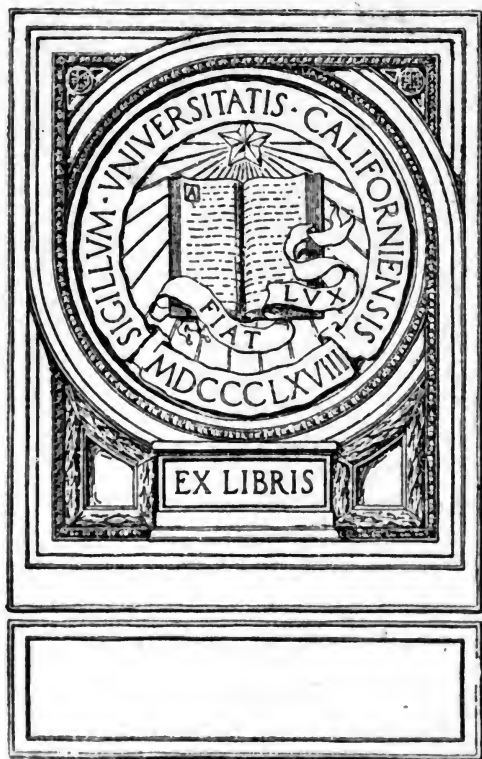
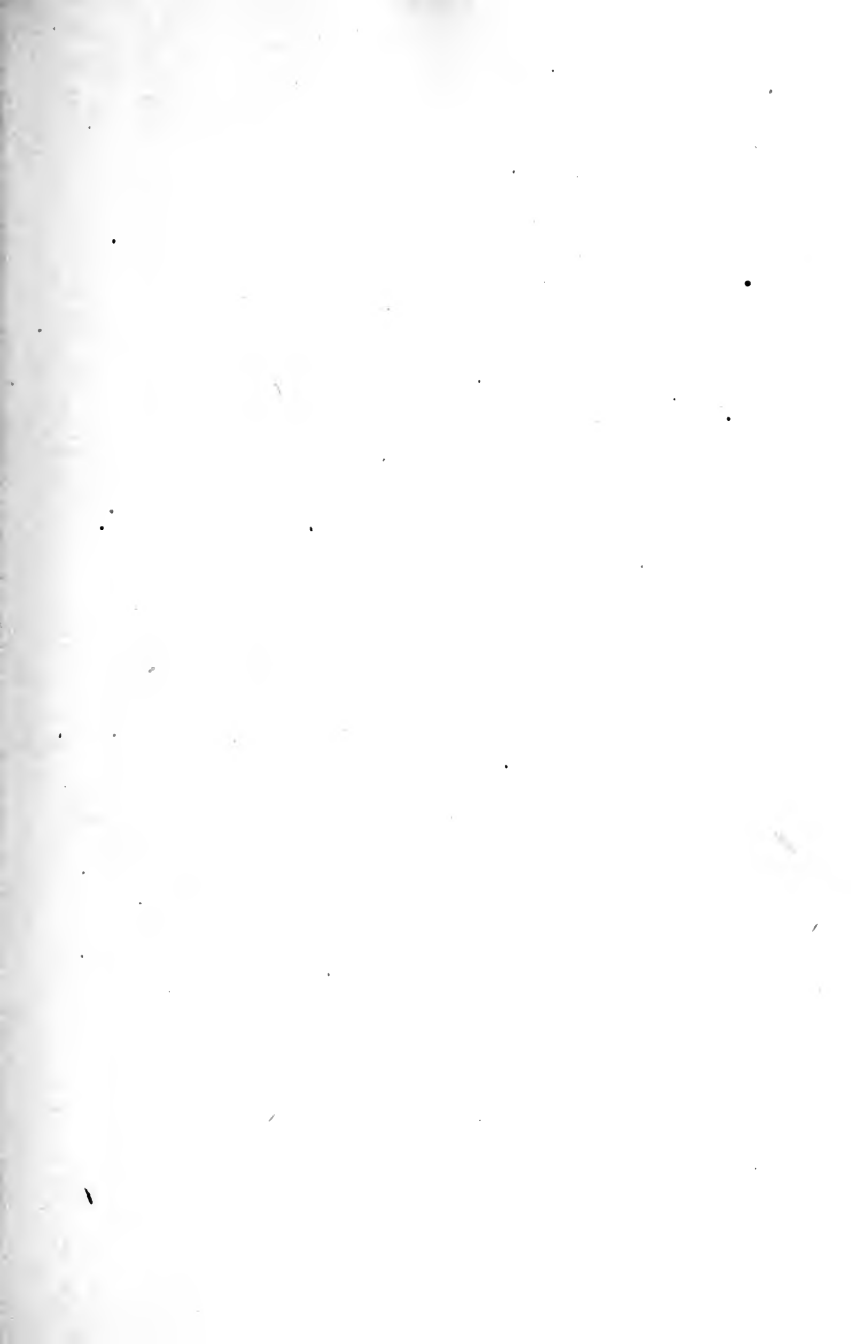
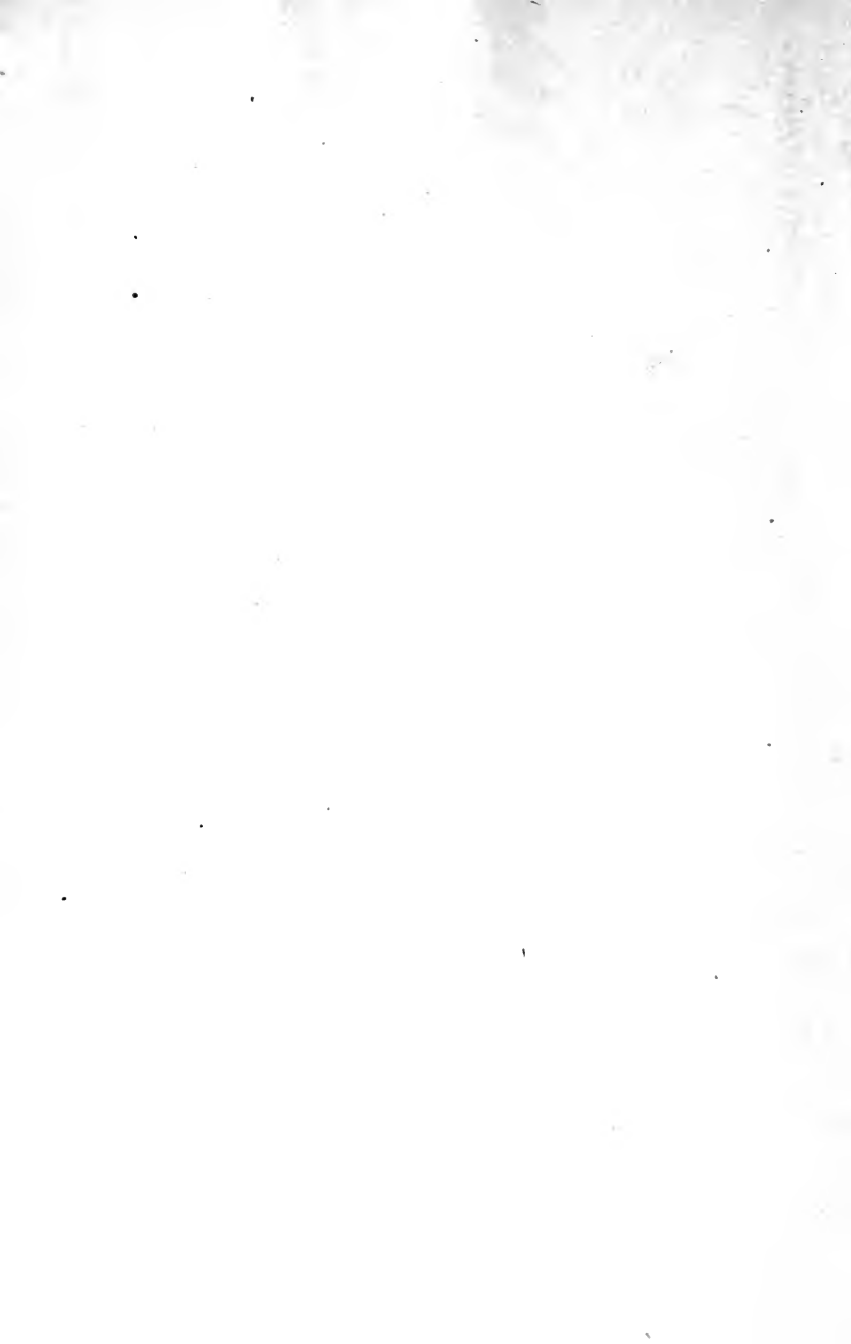


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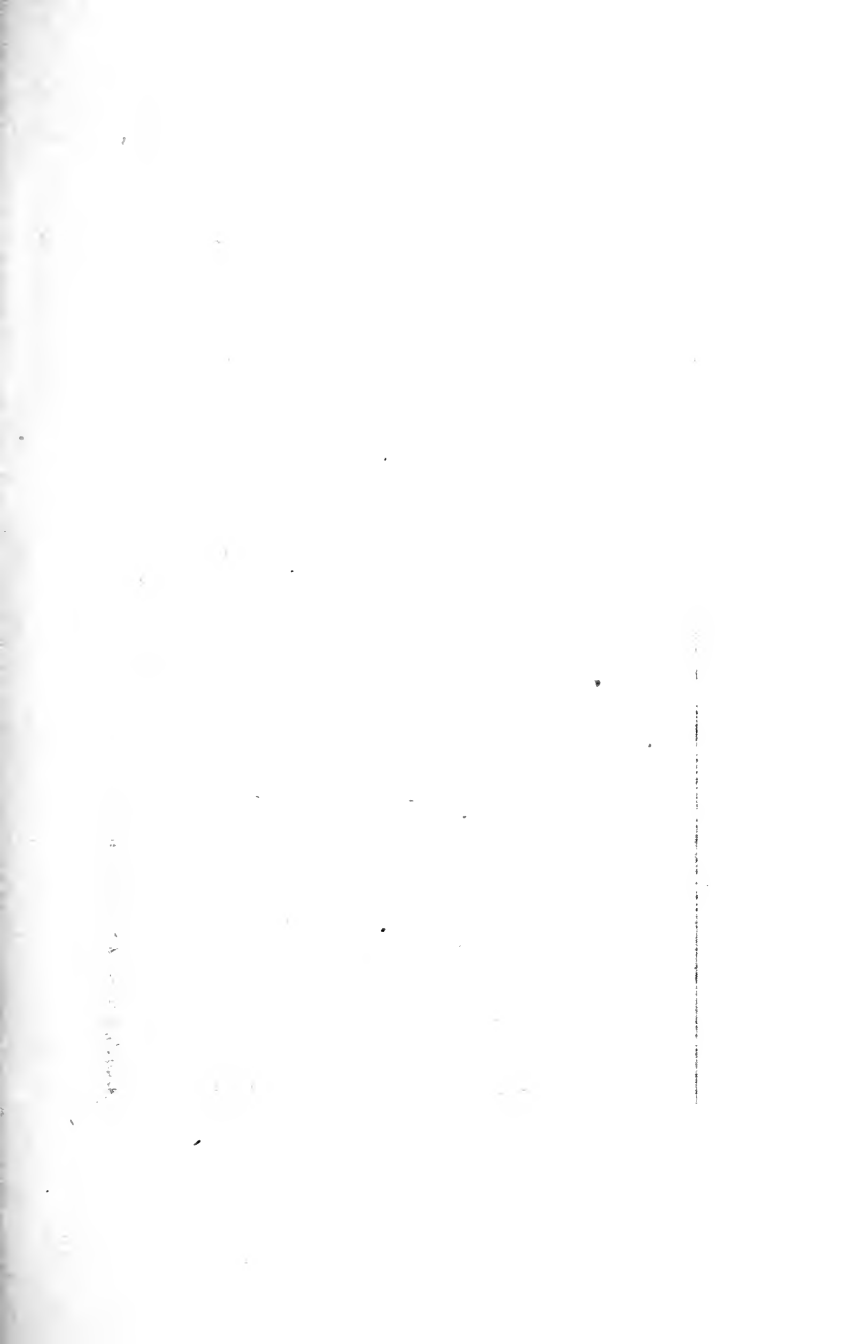






**IN KULTURED KAPTIVITY**

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Ivan Rossiter

# IN KULTURED KAPTIVITY

LIFE AND DEATH IN GERMANY'S  
PRISON CAMPS AND  
HOSPITALS

*By*

IVAN ROSSITER

*of the*

First and Third Canadian Mounted Rifles



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## **IN KULTURED KAPTIVITY**



# IN KULTURED KAPTIVITY

## CHAPTER I

### BACK TO THE TRENCHES

"FIRST CANADIAN MOUNTED RIFLES will move into the trenches at Sanctuary Wood to-morrow evening at seven-thirty."

Such was the order that Sergeant Forbes of D Company gave to Thirteenth Platoon.

He could not have given more unwelcome news.

The brigade had finished a turn in the trenches and was now resting. Seven days of real joy, and then this. It was too much.

Thirteenth Platoon was making a night of it. Pay-day had come and all the boys had money. There had also been large packages from Canada and England. The combination started the fun. We were gathered in the hut at C Camp, near Out-

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erdham, in the Ypres sector, and a big game of poker was in progress. Those that were not playing were looking on, or catching up with their delayed correspondence or reading or investigating the contents of the parcels from home. The night was rather warm, but not sultry. The hut was filled with smoke, and every one was trying to talk at once.

But every sound was hushed when Sergeant Forbes gave his order.

"Aren't we going back to Calais for a leave?" "What about the rest we were promised?" "Back up into the old hole again?" "What have we done to deserve this?" "Say, what's the game?" "Gee! ain't we ever going to have a rest?"

The sergeant was unable to give any further information but reminded us to be ready to move off at the time appointed, then he beat a retreat before we could ask any more questions.

The First Brigade of Canadian Mounted Rifles had been formed in the early days of the war. It was made up of the First, Second and Third Regiments. I originally belonged to the latter. We

trained for a considerable time in Canada, as a cavalry organization. After seven months' hard work a message came from General Sir Sam Hughes, who was then the minister of militia, "Would we be willing to serve as an unmounted unit?" Our colonel called a special parade to read the message and to get our views. We all volunteered to go overseas dismounted, of course. Shortly after that we received orders to sail, but no definite word had come as to our status. Our horses arrived in England, but we did not know whether we were afoot or horseback. It was settled for us three months later when orders were received to leave. One fine night in September found us climbing a steep hill at a base in France.

We knew then what we were. Our horses were gone. In their stead, we had a full infantry equipment, pack, rifle and bayonet, even to the heavy infantry boots. We had had no previous training in adjusting packs, or heavy marching order. We found it hard work, but soon got accustomed to it.

We were not infantry, only dismounted cavalry. Did we not have our spurs along with us to prove it?

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After three months the brigade was smashed up, but during those three months we had been attached to every division in the Canadian Army, had been corps troops and had been sent from one end of the Canadian line to the other. Indeed whenever there was any dirty work to be done the C. M. R.'s were called upon. We also made a trip into the front line, which proved rather serious to our regiment, as after a particularly heavy shelling we found there were not as many of us as there had been when we went in.

But we were shown during that trip that it was impossible for a cavalry unit to take the place of an infantry battalion. The organization did not fit. So that at the commencement of the new year the two brigades of Mounted Rifles were disbanded, and formed into one infantry brigade, attached to the newly formed Third Division. We were sore at the change, but the personnel of the Canadian Rifles was of the best so they took it with a smile. After a month's intensive training we were able to take our places once more in the line, and this time as regular infantry.

The Third Division of the Canadian Army is probably the only division that was ever made on the field of battle. Two brigades of it were seasoned troops; had done many turns in the front line, been under shell fire and were all veterans. The Third Brigade was made of new troops, but they were of the best, as they proved a little later.

The divisional commander was General Mercer, and a finer man and commander we could not have wished. He was known in our battalion as "Play the Game Mercer," through a little talk he had given the brigade previous to its being broken up. He won fame at the Second Battle of Ypres, where he commanded the First Brigade, when the Canadian First Division held the line and blocked the way to Calais. He was an old hand at the game, a seasoned fighter, knew how to handle men and was on to all the tricks of the enemy.

Brigadier-General Williams was the commanding officer of our brigade. He was also a member of the First Division and had served at the Second Battle of Ypres. All the staff officers had had previous experience, so that we had the making of a fine

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division. Later on when the big action came it fulfilled its earlier promise.

We served for six months along the Messines front, and three months in the Ypres sector. Our brigade had been the first to move into this part of the line. Up to this time, no attacks had been made on our sector, although things had been far from quiet, as our casualty list showed. The Second Division had a nice little go with the Germans at St. Eloi, and the First Division had another brush with the enemy at Hill 60. These engagements had made an enormous amount of work for all of us, for frequently orders would come for a general "Stand to," on account of the fighting that was taking place in the other division's line. The lines that we had taken over were in a fearful condition, owing to previous fighting and the exceptionally hard winter that had just passed, so that all our spare time, even when in divisional rest, we had to work on them. The roads were under continual shell fire at night, and our camps behind the line during the day, while not infrequently German aeroplanes visited us and dropped their deadly calling-cards. Through all



this the weather had been as bad as weather can be, shifting from hot to cold with heavy rain showers in between. All of this did not improve our nerves.

On our last trip in it was rumored that it was to be our last. After we came out we were to go back to Calais and Dunkirk, for a long rest. The rumor was persistent, officers and men believed it. When we changed places with the Second Battalion of C. M. R.'s we found they also believed that it was their last trip, so while in supports we began to build "castles in the air," dreams of what we were going to do when we got back there and had our leave.

So you can imagine our feeling when Sergeant Forbes gave us our order. We argued it and discussed it and ended up by calling the Germans every name under the sun, and many that had never been heard before for I must admit that the Canadian soldier has a splendid condemnatory vocabulary.

"First Post," one of the most beautiful calls in the army, was sounded, and we turned in for the night. The boys put away their banjos and their mandolins and ceased their singing, so the camp

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was quiet when "Last Post" rang out. In the distance we could hear the noises from the firing line; the spasmodic rifle fire, the sudden burst of the Emma Gees or occasionally the report of a gun and the explosion of a shell. Now and then a big truck would rumble past, or a transport laden with provisions on its way to the front line. Soon however all were asleep, troubles, for the time being, forgotten.

"How are the provisions?" asked Smitty my chum, the next morning.

"Haven't got them yet," I replied. "But we'll have to get a good many things, as we are nearly out."

Smitty was officially known as Corporal C. M. Smith, but to all the boys he was just plain Smitty. We had been together ever since we had enlisted. He was about twenty-eight years of age, tall, handsome and red-haired, though no one ever thought of calling him Ginger. We used to sleep together, eat together, and share everything we had, even to our letters and our money. We had a small air-blast

stove and as we always carried a lot of extra food in with us we usually had excellent meals.

So we promptly paid a visit to the Y. M. C. A. and purchased sundry articles, such as sardines, pickles, sauce, paste, chocolate, milk and rolled oats. After this I paid my respects to the different cooks that I was on calling acquaintance with to say good-by and incidently to get a few more tins of jam or butter or "Machnochie," a stew. I always found that the cooks had the best varieties of jam. Then I cleaned all my equipment preparatory to moving into the front line.

In the afternoon I went to the nearest Y. M. C. A. hut and wrote a letter home. Little did I think it would be the last for many a day.

"Fall in," ordered our officer, and the Lewis Machine Gun Section fell in. Lieutenant Nay then inspected us, and we loaded our guns into the transport.

"Forms Fours! Right! Forward! March!" and we were on our way to the trenches once more.

But there was something the matter to-night.

There was none of the usual excitement; everything was quiet and orderly. The boys were silent as they marched away; very little talking and no singing. We passed small villages that had been shelled to bits, along what had once been beautiful tree-bordered roads, but which now were pitted with shell-holes and denuded of trees. By the time we passed "Shrapnel Corner," we were in single formation, with three paces between each man. This is always done so that a visiting shell would only get a few. But to-night for some unexplainable reason there were no shells, even Shrapnel Corner was quiet. We usually expected casualties when moving into the Ypres sector, but to-night we had none. All arrived safely at the communication trench, that led to our trenches in Sanctuary. Soon the exchange was made and the other battalion was on its way out.

Sanctuary Wood is at the apex of that small but famous and very costly salient—Ypres. It was here that the First Division of Canada gained undying fame and made a name for Canada. It was here also that "Flammenwerfer," or liquor fire, was

first used. The city of Ypres has been battered by the German shells until hardly a building remains standing. All the villages that surround Ypres have been reduced to ruins, and in one of them, Hooze, there is hardly one stone left upon another. It has been blown to pieces and has now become a part of the trench system.

Owing to the almost continual fighting the trenches, at least those in our sector, were in poor shape. Some places there were none at all. Then again the soil was sandy and it was difficult to construct dug-in trenches. As usual the Germans held what little high ground there was.

"The Hun has been range finding, on this position," said the boys of the battalion that we relieved.

We only laughed at them—for were we not old seasoned troops?—and mounted our Lewis gun on the parapet merely to show our contempt for the Germans, and blazed away.

But it might have been just as well that we had not. The next morning the Germans were range finding. Our position had been noted the night before and they were feeling for our machine-gun

emplacements. When the shelling began I was called from the dug-out, where I had slept. I remember I was reading the *Red Book Magazine* when two "duds," shells that do not explode, landed near by and shook the earth up a bit. These were shortly followed by another and the next thing I knew, after a terrific explosion, I found myself pinned down by what had once been part of the wall of our dug-out. A shell had landed squarely, destroying it completely and burying me and the gun beneath the ruins. I extricated myself quickly from this undignified position and found that no harm, outside a general shaking up, had been done either to myself or the gun.

"You can report back to the transport," said Sergeant Whitson, that night.

"Nothing doing," said I, "to-morrow we will be relieved." And we were, but not by our own men.

The night was quiet and gave us an opportunity to repair our parapets and trenches. At dawn when we came to "Stand to" the work was finished.

"There will be an inspection by General Mercer and Brigadier-General Williams this morning. All

trenches must be clean and in good order." Such was a message sent by Colonel Shaw, the commanding officer of the First Mounted Rifles.

At "Stand down," we began to clean up. All old bully beef and empty tins were picked up and thrown over the top into No Man's Land. We cleared out the dug-outs and replaced the old sandbags with new; then when our rifles were cleaned, everything was ready for the inspection.

When the work was finished those of us who were off duty were allowed to go to our dug-outs for sleep.

## CHAPTER II

### PRISONERS OF WAR

"ARE you going to sleep all day? Somebody else wants your share of the dug-out. Time you were on duty," yelled Reddy Cross.

Bailly and I stretched ourselves as much as the dug-out would allow, disentangled our legs from the knots in which they were tied and crawled out from our happy little home.

"Gee! It's some morning," exclaimed Bailly. "Wish I was back in Canada."

"Same here," I yawned.

Dawn was just breaking when we went to sleep and the promise of a fair day was anything but hopeful. Now the sky overhead was cloudless and the sun was shining brightly. I looked into the woods behind us. The stately oaks were a mass of green foliage. The ground was covered with wild flowers and tall grass, though here and there it was



pitted with shell-holes. A short way behind us were the ruins of a former trench, all torn and battered, and there were a great many stumps and fallen trees showing that many battles had been fought on this ground. Immediately behind our dug-out was a grave with a cross bearing the inscription, "R. I. P. To an unknown British Soldier." It seemed to have a special attraction for me and I wondered who he was and would I ever be an unknown.

Little did I think then that before the day passed our trenches would be in worse shape than the one behind us, and that a number of our fellows would have gone to join that unknown British soldier.

I looked through the periscope into No Man's Land. A hundred yards away I could see a layer of sand-bags that indicated German trenches. In front of the sand-bags stretched great masses of barbed wire, while running from them like long fingers were some new "saps," or short trenches leading from the main line of defense into No Man's Land. These are used to get into this dangerous strip without running the risk of going over the top and getting plugged in the act.

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No Man's Land was a desolate waste of grass, with here and there an old stump or a fallen tree. In the center stood an old and partly demolished farm-house.

"What have you for breakfast?" said Bailly.

"How would some fried bacon, Quaker oaks, bread, jam and tea suit you?" I asked him.

"Great," he replied.

I got out our stove, and breakfast was soon on the way. I thought, as I turned the bacon, of many days back home when I had gone camping. It did not seem possible that a war was in progress. Bailly spread out a clean sand-bag and cut the bread. Then wiping the dirt off his bayonet by driving it into the trench wall, he opened the jam. By this time I had the rest of the breakfast ready and, seated on the firing step, we eagerly fell to with just a few thicknesses of sand-bags between us and the enemy.

I think that aroma of the bacon must have risen from our trench and been carried across No Man's Land to the nose of a German sniper. For while we were eating some fellow opened up on our para-

pet and tried to flavor our meal with Belgian mud. We liked our breakfast well enough the way it was, without any flavoring.

"I am going to teach that boche a lesson," said Bailly, and departed to make a sniper's rifle, while I washed up the dishes and replaced them in the hole in the wall where we kept all our provisions and utensils.

I hunted up my haversack, got out the *Red Book Magazine* and settled down for a lazy morning. Everything was still and quiet. The artillery for once was silent. Not a shell was coming over. Except for the occasional exchange of shots by the two snipers, there was nothing to remind us that there was a war. Even the birds in the woods behind us were singing a blithe and peaceful carol. Yet only a hundred yards apart were two armies and before nightfall one of them would cease to exist.

The stillness was suddenly broken. There was a report, a roar overhead, and immediately before our trench rose a geyser of earth, smoke and water, followed by an ear-splitting concussion. This was the first shell. The herald of what was to come.

"Where did that one go to?" cried Bailly, through a shower of falling mud and water.

"I think we'd better call the rest of the bunch," said I.

But this was unnecessary as the boys were already coming from the dug-out.

They were mad at Heinie for so rudely disturbing their sleep, and were inclined to call him some very ugly names.

At first we thought this was to be a repetition of the day before, but soon we had another thought coming to us.

Gradually the shelling increased until the noise became deafening. Shells were falling all around us. It kept getting worse and worse until it was impossible to distinguish one explosion from another; it was one mighty roar. We had been through this sort of thing before, but never any of like violence. Trenches rocked and swayed from the crash and concussion. Tons of metal were concentrated upon this short space as if the heavens were opened and deadly missiles were being dropped upon us. High above even this awful roar came a terrible

deathly screech from the mighty naval guns that had been specially massed for the occasion. They tore out whole sections and the concussion was sufficient to cave in the walls of trenches some distance away. Sand-bags were blown into the air, and there was a continual hum of flying shrapnel, broken in on now and then by the crash of falling trees.

Sanctuary Wood was at the apex of the Ypres salient and the Germans had silently massed great numbers of guns of all sizes and on both sides, so that shells were coming not only from the front but from the right and left as well. Besides the terrible rain of high explosive there was also a barrage of shrapnel, hunting out those that the shells did not get, and another curtain of fire behind us that successfully cut off all reinforcements from getting to us. Between it and their own front line the Hun systematically bombarded every inch of ground. It was impossible to find any protection; there was only one thing to do and that was to sit tight and wait for the inevitable end. It seemed to me it would never come.

Early in the shelling my chum and I had taken

up a position in what looked to us to be a strong traverse. This withstood the bombardment for some time but eventually was hit, and we were buried. We dug ourselves out, but another shell coming from the rear demolished the parados, burying us again. Once more we extricated ourselves and found to our surprise that neither one of us was hurt. We then decided to get back to the supports by crawling along over what had once been the trench. This was not a pleasant trip.

Arriving at the communication trench we discovered it was receiving exactly the same attention as the front line, so we turned about and crawled back. On the way to the supports we had passed four fellows huddled together in a dug-in traverse, so we joined them. The shells were falling thick and fast here as elsewhere but somehow we managed to escape. I am not going to say we weren't frightened, because we were, but all we could do was keep perfectly still, hug close to the parapet and wonder why death did not put us out of our misery.

Soon we noticed an aeroplane flying overhead, not much more than seventy-five feet above us. Now,

six men clustered together in a traverse said only one thing to the air men: a machine-gun crew. They immediately signaled back to their artillery, and soon we were the special object of their attention. The shells would rush past us, so close we could almost feel the hot breath of them, and explode just behind us. But still we were not hit, though under this grueling fire the traverse gradually crumbled away. With a sickening crash a big one fell near us and the six of us were buried. We dug ourselves out, unharmed except for the shock.

"I'm getting out of this," said one of the fellows.

"With you," replied another. "Come on. Me for supports."

And the four that we had joined left to go overland to the support trenches. My chum and I gathered together a few of the sand-bags and built ourselves a little wall or barricade, but the shells in their search soon found us and the barricade was blown in. This time I was wounded in the leg and we decided to try for the supports. Crawling back, under and over fallen trees, smashed and battered trenches, we found a fairly deep shell-hole.

"I think we might as well stop here," said my companion.

The hole looked good to me, so we took to it. Between us we had only one rifle, one bayonet and one entrenching tool. Now there is no hole, however deep, that is deep enough for the average fighting man, so we immediately began to dig. Crouching down, we worked as we had never worked before, my chum loosening the earth while I scraped it into a little pile and shoveled it over.

Suddenly a "crump" landed alongside of us but we were both below the force of the explosion and so escaped. However, I was in the act of removing some earth and my hand was above the edge of the hole's rim. I felt a sudden burning sensation in it and knew that I had been wounded.

"I've got my Blighty," said I, turning to my companion.

"You lucky dog!" he cried.

While he was bandaging me I said, "Just think of the time I am going to have. No more war for a while. Pretty nurses to tend to me, and lots of good things to eat. And say, it is June, too,—



strawberries and cream." I made him envious of my wound.

While I was raving on he happened to look over the edge of the shell-hole. What he saw there evidently did not please him.

"Great lord, there are a thousand Huns out there!" he exclaimed.

"You're seeing things," I replied

"Well, suppose you take a little look for yourself."

I looked! Gone were all my dreams of Blighty, for there on all sides were the Germans, advancing in a sort of open formation, the officers in the rear, driving their men into action instead of leading as do our officers. The attacking troops were loaded down with rolls of barbed wire, picks, shovels and sand-bags. They were equipped for a long stay. At first they ran into no opposition as there was no one there to stop them. But soon to our right a machine gun got busy and then the Germans began to look for cover. Their artillery lifted and moved farther back to prevent our reenforcement from coming through.

Spasmodic rifle fire opened up behind us. Then we could hear the lighter explosions of the bombs.

What few of our men were left in the supports put up a magnificent defense.

Colonel Shaw, our commanding officer, seeing how desperate was the position, threw down his revolver, grabbed up a rifle and bayonet and at the head of eighty men went over the top leading them into certain death. Very few of that eighty ever came back. Most of them died fighting to the last, our leader among them.

The colonel was one of the best of men and officers. He never allowed "his boys" to go in where he had not been himself. Patient and kind and brave, he was loved by every man in the regiment.

Captain Wilkin, our greatly loved regimental chaplain and a fighting man as well, went over with the colonel and his little party to try to stop the Germans. The chaplain used his bayonet to good advantage, and when, unluckily, it snapped off, he used his fists on the boche, and was captured while mixing it up with a German private. They respected the cloth apparently and took him prisoner.

When the action was over the Germans had captured our first line on a twelve-hundred-yard front and a bit of the supports in one or two places. They had done it by their artillery and not by the infantry attack. There was only a handful of defenders left at the last charge and yet they could not penetrate through the supports. They won a temporary victory by the preponderance of artillery.

When we saw the Germans attack, we knew we would be unable to put up any worth-while defense. I was wounded and could do nothing. But being isolated and only two of us, we never expected we'd be taken alive.

"Well, good-by, old scout. We'll meet somewhere else before long." And we shook hands and waited, but not for long.

Suddenly two dirty, unshaven and brutal faces appeared over the edge of the shell-hole. For a moment or two nothing happened. Then they growled something we could not understand and signaled to us to come out. We crawled over the edge and were immediately confronted by a German officer with a large revolver—the largest I thought

I had ever seen. We felt nervous but I guess he was almost as shaky as we were. He gave us the once-over and then signaled us to move back. We moved from one Hun wave to another, crossing the desolate ruins of our old trench system, crossed No Man's Land, which was now German land, and into the German trenches—two prisoners of war.

## CHAPTER III

### A BEER GARDEN BEHIND THE LINES

“WHAT are you? *Englishers?*”

We turned sharply about. In the entrance to a dug-out was a Prussian. From his dress I judged him to be an “under” or non-commissioned officer. He had enough gold braid on him to have been a band-master. Seeing he had us covered with a very competent-looking revolver, we hastened to assure him of our nationality.

“No, Canadian,” I replied.

We had heard all sorts of tales of what the Germans did to their prisoners, and weren’t feeling any too cheerful over the prospects. This fellow looked so ferocious with his up-turned mustache, “kaiser fashion,” and bellowed in such a man-eating voice that we again began to think our turn had come.

“Canadianers!” he screamed—I can hear his voice yet—and then followed a very fluent line of Ger-

man, that I was unable to keep pace with and that would never pass the censor anyhow.

He called us everything ugly that the German language yields and then turned us over to a sentry to be conducted back. Passing along the front line, I noticed a great difference between their trenches and ours. They were dug-in, wide and deep. But they used very few sand-bags, just a few layers above the level of the earth. The sides were held in place by sections of woven wood. The bottom had trench mats such as we used, and occasionally there was a small opening leading down into a deep dug-out. The sentry was in a bit of a hurry so we did not stop to explore them, but hurried along through the vast network of communication trenches. Now and again we'd be blocked in our passage by the work of the British artillery where it landed on the trench, smashing it in. We would then retrace our steps and go on down another branch. Sometimes a British shell would whistle overhead and then there was a scramble and rush to get out of the way. I soon found that the Germans feared our artillery as greatly as they hated

us, but they had a wholesome respect for the former. Frequently we had to halt to allow troops to pass on their way to the front.

Finally, we reached the dressing station. It was a very busy spot just at that moment. Stretcher-bearers were coming in with wounded Huns, orderlies were running here and there, putting on bandages and sending the first-aided back to the hospital.

The station was well protected, dug deep into the ground with a plentiful supply of concrete on top. Cement steps led down to the entrance, which was flanked on each side by small pine-trees in pails. The main quarters were lighted by electricity.

But in spite of all this it was entirely different from the Red Cross stations that I had been accustomed to. There the enemy wounded would receive exactly the same attention as our own men. Each took his turn, and the doctors never discriminated. They see in the wounded men only a wounded man who needs attention.

The Red Cross that I had been accustomed to did things on the square, and I foolishly expected the

same here. But I soon discovered that a German Red Cross is German, and the world to-day knows what that means.

We waited a long time, seated on the entrance steps, but no attention was paid to us. Four more prisoners were brought in, but still we were ignored. Numbers of Germans passed us by on their way to the front and they always stopped for a few seconds to look us over. Some did not forget to tell us that we belonged to a special family that has a pig or a dog for an origin. But one little drummer boy, seeing our condition and realizing how thirsty we must be, stopped long enough to give us a mouthful of cold coffee. That was an exceptional act of kindness.

While at this dressing station, I saw a great number of German wounded. I had had little respect for the Hun as a fighting man and after this experience I had less. He is a coward when it comes to standing pain, and will blubber and cry if the doctor even looks at him. We boys couldn't stand it, for we had been used to seeing our men quiet and cheerful under all circumstances. The doctors and



orderlies also were different, for while they were efficient, they were rough and gloomy. Sympathy and cheerfulness were conspicuous by their absence. There were no kind words, no encouraging smiles, no laughing and joking, no one asking for a "fag" or for chocolate. A wound to the boche is a very serious thing. But then they are not going back to Blighty like our chaps.

Finally a doctor stopped to examine us, if you can call anything so short, quick and rough an examination. But all he did was to cause us a lot of needless pain. When he had gone the same sentry again took charge of us and we passed along different communication trenches until at last we arrived at a little grove of trees, where the trench ended.

"These Germans must have rather a decent time back here," remarked a fellow from the Princess Pats.

The wood was a revelation to us. It was not large, probably a small estate belonging to some rich landowner, in the pre-war days. But now the Germans with their usual thoroughness had trans-

formed it into a beer garden. There were clearings here and there with rustic tables and chairs, sheltered by vine-covered trellis work, making cool and comfortable spots for the Huns to gather and enjoy their national pastime. In the center of the grove was the main building, built in the same rustic style. It looked so cool and inviting that we wanted to stop and rest, but of course were not allowed to. At the edge of the wood was a small stream spanned by a bridge of rustic design which lead to the Brigade Headquarters where there was another dressing station. This place certainly filled us with amazement. It was barely a mile behind the lines, but the German staff had not wasted their time. The headquarters building was constructed entirely of cement, the roof had a plentiful covering of earth, stone and broken bricks, while the whole structure was almost covered with vines. Small boxes of flowers were at each window and there was a lattice work open-air dining-room for the officers. In front was a well tended garden of many sorts of flowers, and at the side another of vegetables. It was all cleverly designed so that it could not be seen by some prow-

ing aeroplane. As we gazed at this delightful spot it was hard to believe it was in the war zone, but the sentry woke us up, turned us over to the authorities and left again for the front line. As at the first dressing station there were a number of German wounded and, as at first, the doctor neglected to attend to us. But if we didn't appeal to him there were others who were very much interested in us, the colonel of the regiment that had captured us, for example.

"What regiment do you belong to?" he asked me.

"First Mounted Rifles," I replied.

"And you?" to another, with a red badge on his shoulder.

"The Princess Pats," the Pat answered.

"Oh! The Princess Pats. We have met your battalion before," said the colonel, "but this is the first time that we have taken any of you prisoners."

"May I have one of your badges as a souvenir?" he asked of each of us in turn, and we all complied.

"What was the name of your position?" he asked.

"Hill 60," unblushingly replied a chap from the Fourth C. M. R's.

"Are you sure? I think it was Sanctuary Wood."

"Sanctuary Wood? No, sir, Hill 60."

"You are mistaken," angrily replied the officer. "Now, tell me the truth."

"But that is the truth, at least that's what our officer told us."

This made the colonel furious.

"How many guns have you? And what size are they?" he asked.

"I don't belong to the artillery," the chap replied. "I am an infantryman."

"But surely you know something about the guns that are behind you," he insisted.

"We aren't supposed to know," was the answer.

"How many men have you guarding Ypres?" was the next demand.

"I have only been out here two days. Just came into the line last night."

After a few more questions of this nature, and getting the same style of answer, the colonel left us in disgust.

Members of his staff tried in different ways, in-

cluding threats and bribes, to get us to give information, but all were as successful as their superior officer.

At last the doctor finished dressing the wounded Germans, who had kept us entertained with their moans and groans, and turned to us. He graciously allowed us to sit down, which was a relief as we had been standing rigidly to attention during the cross-examination. The doctor worked rapidly and soon had the six of us out of his way. Of course speed and care do not always go hand in hand, and this was one of the instances where they did not.

We were then given a drink of water, clear and cold, that had come all the way from Germany, for the kaiser's army does not drink the water of Belgium. Each regiment has a bottling plant of its own back in the Fatherland and the men are supplied with water from their own section of the country. It is even furnished to the men in the front-line trenches. On our way back to the dressing station, we had passed many cases filled with empty bottles ready to be shipped home and refilled.

After this refreshing drink we were turned over

to a wounded boche, who led us across shell-pitted fields, past ruined houses and cleverly camouflaged artillery until we came to a road. Here we sat down, to the guard's great wrath, who demanded in broken English what we meant.

"Are there no ambulances?" asked one of our number.

"What! ambulance for *schwein-hund!*" he screamed. "*Nein! Marsch!*"

Tired and sick, we got to our wounded legs—five of us were nearly incapacitated for locomotion—and all were suffering intensely from loss of blood. The Belgian roads are cobblestone and not ideal for marching, particularly on an extremely hot day such as this was. Sometimes our guard would stop, put one hand over his head and order us to "Halt." Then from among the crowd of onlookers one would step out with a camera to take our pictures. This happened frequently, but we were never allowed to sit down, or to pause any longer than was necessary, to take the picture.

At last we arrived at the Divisional Headquarters, five miles behind the lines, where again we were

questioned and threatened as before, and with the same result.

This ordeal over, we were led into a field and allowed to sit down, though not under the shade of a near-by hedge, but in the open so that the blistering rays of the sun could beat down upon us and add to our discomfort. This was not thoughtlessness but premeditated punishment. Here great numbers of Germans crowded around us, curious as to our badges, buttons and steel helmets. They also plied us with questions of all sorts, for the German is never happy unless corkscrewing information out of his victim. Being hungry and thirsty, we asked for something to eat and drink, but they paid no attention to our request; simply continued to examine us up one side and down the other as though we were on exhibition.

While this was going on another group of prisoners arrived, mostly engineers. Their long rubber thigh boots had been taken from them, and in their stead they wore sand-bags wrapped about their feet, which, though the men were used to hard marching, were bleeding and in terrible condition. Most of

the engineers were wounded, many could not walk and were carried by their comrades.

They were allowed to rest with us for a short time, then we were counted and all turned over to two Uhlans for another march. That last journey will live forever in my memory. One Uhlan rode in front to set the pace, and it was fast; the other brought up the rear to see that none of us lagged. If any one did, the Uhlan, armed with a twelve-foot lance, would dig his spurs in his horse and charge. Few failed to keep the pace more than once.

As we passed through the different Belgian towns and villages, the women and children threw chocolate, cigarettes and tobacco to us, but it was heart-breaking sometimes to take it, because we saw many of them punished for their generosity. The women were frequently knocked down and kicked; and I have seen them beaten and trampled on and their hair pulled in a way that is only possible to the exponents of "Kultur."

At last, footsore and weary, we arrived at Moorslede, ten miles behind the boche line, a town somewhat larger than any that we had passed



through. We marched along the streets to the hoots and gibes of the soldiers who had congregated to see the captured Canadians. No arrangements had been made for the reception of prisoners. Six of us were sent to a convent, shavings and blankets given us, a sentry placed on guard, and thus we were left. Our wounds were not dressed that night and though there were hospitals in the town, they were not for us.

Naturally we passed a very uncomfortable night and were not sorry when morning came. A few nuns were still quartered in the convent and at breakfast time they sent us down each a slice of war cake from their own scanty supply. We should have been glad to thank them, for, but for them, we should have gone breakfastless. But we had no opportunity as they were forbidden to communicate with us.

During the morning I was taken to a hospital close by, to be examined and have my wound dressed.

"Will my hand be all right, or shall I be crippled for life?" I asked the doctor.

"Why, certainly not," he replied. "In a few months you'll be working for us back in Germany."

A cheerful prospect.

That afternoon my companions were brought to the hospital, but no sooner were they ready for bed than an order came transferring us all to another city. When we were dressed—and we were made to do it in a hurry—we marched across the town to a waiting train, and were soon on our way farther back, but we knew not where.

## CHAPTER IV

### NO ANESTHETIC FOR SWINE

"HELLO, kid! Did they get you too?"

After a short ride to Menin, we changed cars, and this was the greeting that welcomed me as I entered the other train. There were a number of Canadians from the Princess Pats and the First and Fourth Mounted Rifles on board who, like myself, had been wounded and captured the day before.

"Don't you know me?"

Again that voice. I looked closely but could not recognize him, he was so covered with mud, and three-quarters of his face and head were bandaged.

"You would know me all right, kid," he laughed, "if you could see my face."

Then I recognized him, or rather his laugh.

"Why, hello, Mac! Sure they got me; don't I look it?"

McLaughlin, or Mac, as he was better known, was one of the battalion signalers.

"There are some more of the boys in here," he said.

So I hunted them out and we had a time of it, swapping stories, asking and answering a thousand different questions.

"Say, fellows! We are coming into a large city," cried Mac.

And so we were but no one knew its name.

On arrival at the station, we found however that it was our destination, for we were detrained and marched to a Red Cross depot. Every large railway station in Germany and in the occupied parts of Belgium have these Red Cross canteens.

"I wonder what they're going to do to us now?" asked Mac.

An orderly appearing with a tray of cups, followed by another with sandwiches and a jug of coffee, answered the question. We were each given a sandwich and a mug of coffee. The cups were not large and neither were the rye bread and sausage sandwiches. This was practically the first full meal any of us had had since our capture and we were mighty hungry.

"Gee! I could eat an army boot," said one of the boys. "Anybody here game to ask for another Heinie sandwich?"

Mac was from Iowa and game for anything, so when the orderly came around he did the Oliver Twist act and asked for more. The orderly looked us over for a moment as if he didn't know what to make of us and then walked over to another orderly and talked with him a few moments. This one appeared more astonished and then together they reported the matter to an officer.

"I wonder if I could have made a break," said Mac. "Our modest request seems to have entirely smashed the German organization."

The officer, accompanied by the two orderlies, approached us.

"What was it you wanted?" he asked.

Mac explained that we were all still hungry and would like some more sandwiches and coffee.

For a moment even the officer was nonplussed.

"We have no orders to give you more than one," he finally replied. "So you can't have any more."

That's Germany for you. The Hun will carry

out his orders to the letter, but if any unprovided-for situation arises, he is lost. Things that with us would be left to our own judgment and discretion he must have his order for from some one higher up before he can act. The average German soldier reminds me very much of a person under a hypnotic spell: he is able to do exactly what he is told but nothing further. Naturally he is lacking in that most essential quality, "initiative."

While waiting at Courtrai—for that was the name of the town—a number of German soldiers and civilians gathered around us and examined us as though we were freaks in a side-show. I have yet to meet any crowd of people that can equal the Germans in curiosity. A self-constituted speaker usually steps to the front and asks questions, while the rest look on with wide-open mouths as though taking in everything that is said, staring first at the speaker as he questions, then at us when we answer.

A cattle train drew into the station and diverted their attention. It was not loaded with cattle but with more of our men captured the previous day.

'And whoever did the loading did a good job: it would have been impossible to get in another man. There was no room for them to sit, much less lie down. At the the door of each car a German sentry sat on a stool, with a rifle and a bayonet across his knees. The train only stopped for a short time and we were not given a chance to speak to the poor devils.

About eleven-thirty that night an ambulance appeared to take us to a hospital. The ambulance I might have said, for there was only one, and the hospital was a good distance from the station, but eventually we were all taken care of. It was about twelve when I reached the large darkened building, kept so for fear of air raids.

"Mac!" I said, when we entered, "am I awake or asleep? This is not meant for us. It is only another one of their devilish tricks to give us a look at heaven before they send us to the other place. Pinch me."

Mac did, and I was quite sure I was not asleep.

"But, Mac! Good lord, this place can't be for us. It's too fine and clean."

"Guess it must be for us. Look, they are putting Clark and Marshall to bed," he said, as we stepped into one of the wards. Everything was white and clean. It was brilliantly lighted with gas. I had not seen gas for so long that I could hardly keep my eyes off it.

Noticing something strange on four legs, I asked Mac if he knew what it was.

"Well," said Mac, "when I went to school they called 'em beds, but I don't know now."

And that's what they proved to be. There were the usual lockers, chairs, etc., that are found in every hospital. Scattered through the ward were vases filled with beautiful flowers.

"Mac! There's some mistake here," I said. "We've got into the wrong pew."

Just then two orderlies, dressed in white, came up to us and dispelled our fears. "Get into the next two empty beds," said one of them.

With the assistance of the orderlies we got our clothes off and climbed in.

"Say, Mac! Isn't this great? Gee, I feel comfortable!"



"Same here, kid. It's too comfortable; won't we be able to sleep!"

"Me! I'm never goin' to wake up, and I'm not goin' to waste any time in getting to sleep, either."

*"All prisoners will turn over what papers and pictures they have in their possession, and no one will go to sleep until he has answered the doctor's questions."*

Here was a jarring note that brought us back once more to the realities of soldier life.

The orderlies then gathered up all our clothes and emptied them of papers and pictures. I had a wonderful collection of pictures that I had received from home and was loath to part with them. But there was no use to protest.

At last the doctor reached my bed. It took considerable time to answer the questionnaire. There was nothing that they did not ask me. But eventually the job was done, the lights were out, while all that could be heard was the steady tramp of the German sentry as he marched up and down the ward.

"Say, kid, are you still awake?" came a whisper.

"Yes," I replied, "I can't get to sleep."

"Wonder what is the matter? When I saw these beds I thought it would be easy."

"Too damned easy," I replied.

And we weren't the only ones to whom sleep did not come that night. What with the strange softness of the beds, the clump, clump of the sentry with his heavy hob-nailed boots, and our wounds which were beginning to throb and pain for lack of further attention, we spent altogether a very miserable night, and were a thoroughly dejected lot of fellows when daylight at last appeared.

"*Guten morgen! Englanders!*" said a soft quiet voice.

We turned in the direction of the door to see two little women, dressed in gray uniforms, with small white linen caps on their heads. On closer examination we found the initials V. A. D. worked on them. One was rather pretty, while the other was older and plain. She was the matron.

"*Englanders!* Listen to me for a moment. I was captured by your soldiers early in this war and they treated me so courteously that, as long as you are in my hospital, I shall try to repay that debt."

This sounded pretty good. Then she left the little sister, Schwester Alma, in charge. She was quite a capable person and soon had us fellows washed and attended to. We had not had a decent bath for some time and we certainly enjoyed the sensation. Then she sent the orderly to bring the breakfast.

*"Guten morgen, Englanders."*

Again we turned to the door. This time it was the doctor.

"I am delighted to see you."

"Good morning," we all answered.

"Have you heard the good news this morning?" he asked, as he began his tour of inspection.

We forgot we were prisoners and were expecting to be told some wonderful English victory.

"We have captured a mile of the Canadian trenches. Also the village of Zillebeke, and two generals."

It was good news for him but hardly what we had expected. We could have told him about the Canadian trench ourselves, but the part about the village and the two generals was news and bad news at that. This was the first intimation we had as to Generals

Mercer and Williams. We later found that the doctor's information was not quite correct, for they had not penetrated to the village of Zillebeke and they captured only General Williams. General Mercer had been killed in the action.

But just the same we smiled, for we weren't going to let this little German doctor think his bad news worried us.

No matter what the Germans may do to our boys, there is one thing they can't take from them and that is their smile. They can imprison them, starve them, abuse them in a hundred different ways but they can't drive that smile away from them. It is the one thing that keeps them going and the Germans puzzled; they can't understand it.

The next morning the doctor had some extra special news that evidently gave him great pleasure, for he plunged right in without giving us his *guten morgen*.

"Oh! *Englanders*, have you heard the glorious news this morning?"

We hadn't.

"We have sunk the whole of the British fleet."

"The whole fleet, did you say, Doctor?"

"Not quite all, but most of it. We have sunk fourteen grosser English battle-ships," and he almost blew up with pride.

"And how many German?" we inconsiderately asked.

"Ah! *Nein!* Only two torpedo boats."

Then we smiled. And he wondered. And I guess he's wondering still.

It was bad news if what he said was true, but we did not believe a word of it. We knew it was impossible for the German fleet to accomplish all that the doctor claimed and get off scot-free. So we simply refused to be fooled. Later the orderly brought in newspapers telling of the battle of Jutland and they confirmed the doctor's claims, but still we smiled. The German people believe that their navy scored a great victory over the British, but after the first few days there was little said about it in the papers.

The next morning the doctor informed us that there was more "grand news" in the papers.

"Well, Doctor, what is it?" we inquired.

"We have sunk the Cruiser *Hampshire* and Kitchener was drowned."

Still we continued to smile, for that poor little doctor did not know what we knew: that Kitchener's work was finished; his magnificent army raised, and that he had died in his uniform as he had wished.

Then I was taken to the operating-room to have my wounds dressed; the one in the leg proved to be a flesh wound. I had been told at the first dressing station that my hand would be all right and that before long I should be working for the Germans. But now the doctor said an operation was necessary. I shall never forget it. I was stretched on my back, held down by attendants, while my second finger was amputated at the middle joint and five bones were taken from the wrist. The only instrument used was an ordinary pair of surgeon's scissors and I was denied an anesthetic. Not that I asked for it, but one of the attendants who seemed shocked by the unnecessary brutality asked if I was not to be given an anesthetic.

"We have no anesthetic for *schwein-hund*," replied the surgeon.

Mine, of course, is not the only case of this kind. Two other members of our party had operations of a similar nature performed upon them. It seems hardly necessary to say that the suffering was intense.

The operation was performed in No. 5, I. G. Western Hospital, Courtrai.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Matron, may we play the piano?" asked Sergeant Hays of the Fourth Mounted Rifles.

"Why, certainly," she said.

"What will you have, boys?" he asked.

"Give us some good old American rag," yelled Mac.

"How will *On the Mississippi* do?" he asked.

"Let her go," we all cried.

The sergeant was a syncopationist for fair, and as he rattled off the rag it was impossible to keep still; even the beds danced, and Pat Rooney (an Irishman) who was able to be up and around, marched up to Schwester Alma and commenced to teach her the latest steps from America. Unlike any other German I ever met she fell into the spirit

of the thing and seemed to enjoy it as much as the rest of us.

Now all this was something new to the Germans. They had never heard music like this nor had singing ever been known in a hospital before. Soon the doorways were packed with Germans anxious to get a look at these "crazy *Englanders*" that could laugh, dance and sing in a hospital.

Sometimes on my way to and from the operating-room, I would pass through the German wards. Lord! what a difference. Instead of being up and around, getting in every one's way, playing practical jokes on one another, assisting the nurses or perhaps making love to them, as in a British hospital, the Huns stick to their beds, gloomily reading or smoking, or idly lying on their backs studying the design on the ceiling.

Hospital to them is a very serious matter, indeed, as is everything else connected with this war. It is almost a sacrilege the way the English laugh and get fun out of it.

The status of a nurse in a German is very different from that in an Allied hospital. For instance,



she can not give orders to any of the German wounded to do any work. She must first ask permission of the doctor in charge. Being a woman she necessarily takes a secondary place. The ward nurse does no bandaging. She is there only to keep the ward clean, and to wait on the patients, with the assistance of an orderly. All the bandaging, or practically all of it, is done by the doctors and trained orderlies.

Schwester Alma did most of the work in our ward and it was more than we could stand to see her slaving as she did, so Pat Rooney and Kennedy, neither of whom was wounded seriously, helped her as much as possible, greatly to her surprise and delight. She could not speak much English and could never remember Kennedy, so she called him "Chimmy" much to every one's amusement, her own included.

We had to be very careful in our talk among ourselves as there were two German under-officers who understood English perfectly and who tried to be very friendly with us. We soon noticed that they would always bring the subject of conversation around to the war in the hope that we might say

something that would be of benefit to them. Even in hospital we could not get away from their terrible spy system.

Soon a number of the fellows were able to travel and some were sent back into Germany while the rest of us were taken to another hospital in Courtrai. It was rather a sad parting for we did not know what was before us, or when we might meet again.

Even the nurses were sorry to see us go, saying they had enjoyed having us there, and that it would be a long time before they again could have as much fun. And so we left No. 5 Lazarett, Courtrai.

## CHAPTER V

### SISTER FREDA

"So you were in No. 13 Municipal, Courtrai," said Temple.

Temple belonged to the Twenty-first Battalion. He had enlisted at Ottawa, and was captured at St. Eloi, the previous April. I met him at Hanover City.

"Yes," I replied. "I spent all the time I cared to spend there."

"So did I," said he. "What did you think of it?"

"Think of it? I can't say I was crazy about it. The doctor was a brute, if ever I met one."

"What was his name?" he asked.

"Schneider."

"Tall and fair, with the usual German waist line?"

"Yes, and close cropped hair."

"And he had a lot of scars on his head, and a long one across his cheek."

"You've got him," I replied.

"Say, I certainly hate that guy. He used to make it hot for me when I went to the operation-room."

"You are not the only one. Whenever he came into our ward we all began to shiver, for we knew we were in for some extra pain. He would rip the bandages as if he enjoyed seeing how rough he could be. His motto seemed to be 'more speed, more pain.' And regimental! Say, whenever he came in the ward every one had to come to attention immediately. I was reading one morning and did not hear him enter. He walked right down to my bed, snatched the book out of my hands and threw it across the room, exclaiming, 'You *Englander schwein* apparently are not taught military etiquette in your country.'"

\* \* \* \* \*

No. 13 had formerly been the Convent Notre Dame. When the Germans occupied Courtrai they commandeered all the public buildings for military purposes. Some were used for headquarters and others, like the convent, were turned into hospitals.

The mother superior and the nuns were allowed to retain a few small rooms, the rest were converted into wards for the German wounded that were brought from the Ypres front.

These nuns were not allowed to visit us, but when Doctor Schneider was not around, Schwester Freda—who by contrast seemed an angel to us—would send word to them and they would come, usually bringing us tobacco or cigarettes, which were not issued as in Allied hospitals. Before leaving, I asked Schwester Freda why she had been so different from the others.

“As a German I am taught to hate you,” she replied, “but if you must know, I could not resist your smiles and your cheerfulness.”

Our life at Courtrai was very monotonous. One day was the same as another, though at night we were sometimes diverted by the thunder of the guns at the front. After a particularly noisy night we would ask if there had been an attack, but always received the same answer, that there was nothing to report. This was our chief topic of conversation,

for we were always hoping the Germans would be driven back and we thereby be released.

One bright afternoon there was a sudden whirring sound overhead. You should have seen the Germans scurry to cover! Then followed a heavy explosion and then another and another. The British were bombing Courtrai! Bombs were dropping all around but none of them hit the hospital. The British do not wage the same kind of warfare as the Germans, who seem to take delight in shelling a building that bears the sacred sign of the Red Cross.

The Allies have fought this war on the square, and no matter what happens, we shall always have the satisfaction of knowing we played the game. It was Germany's dirty underhand methods, her violation of Belgium, the terrible atrocities that she committed there, her sinking of unarmed vessels, her bombing and destruction of unfortified towns and cities, that finally awoke England, made the English people realize that they were fighting the whole German nation—not just the kaiser or the military

party—that eventually brought the United States into the conflict.

If Germany had not committed all these terrible acts, I firmly believe she would have won the war before the rest of the world realized what it was up against.

When the Germans first captured us they took all our clothing from us: our shoes, socks, underwear, trousers, tunics, greatcoats and hats. The only thing they left us was our suspenders. They do this because they are in great need of these things, especially wool and leather. They also issued orders that all clothing must be taken from the dead, as soon as possible after an action, and have special squads to do the work. The clothing is sent to Germany, mended, fumigated and sent back to the line again to be reissued. Prisoners are frequently employed on this work, particularly cleaning the boots that are brought in from the battle-field. It isn't an agreeable task, for often the flesh adheres to the boot and has to be removed. The odor is terrible and frequently makes the men sick.

"We must make room for a number of German wounded, so eighteen Englishmen will leave here to-morrow," growled Doctor Schneider one Sunday night.

I was one of the eighteen.

"But Schwester Freda, we have no clothing," we exclaimed.

"I will see the doctor," she said.

We were rather curious as to where our clothes would come from, so we asked an orderly.

"We will commandeer them from the Belgians," was his reply.

These poor unhappy people! They are at the beck and call of every German requirement. No matter what it is they want they walk into the Belgian's shop, and take it. But they never remember to leave any money or an order on Berlin for payment.

Early the next morning the clothing and the shoes arrived and we had a great time and an amusing scramble picking out what we wanted. The shoes were all too small and the clothing—all sizes and colors—did not fit. In the midst of our excite-



ment breakfast arrived and we knocked off long enough to eat, and then we tried to dress.

We gazed at one another, each trying to imagine what he looked like, and then burst out laughing. I think if any circus manager could have seen us he would have immediately engaged us. We were the last word in freaks. I will describe myself. The rest were no better.

To start with I had picked a pair of Belgian slippers. These were long, narrow and low, fives and a half. I am willing to admit that I wear a somewhat larger size. Next came a pair of beautiful light blue socks; a bright green suit, the trousers rather tight and reaching about to where the garters should have come. This gave a wonderful display of blue socks and a section of the underdrawers which were a brilliant red. The coat too was short and tight, disclosing a very stunning red and black checker-board shirt. But the crowning joy of all was the hat. This was a light gray felt terminating in an Alpine peak. Of course no one can believe it, but I have been very temperate in my description. As the boys looked one another over

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one of them burst out with the most famous of all trench ditties: "When I get my suit of Civies, oh, how happy I shall be." This was too much, and we simply howled.

Just before we left, the mother superior and the nuns paid us a last visit, bringing each of us a small bag containing a number of useful things that were to help us later on.

It was with regret that we said good-by for we were going back into Germany to we knew not what.

We were taken to the station in an ambulance where, after a long wait and greatly to our surprise, we were put on board a very well appointed train, made up of ten hospital cars, a kitchen and a private car for the doctor. The train was painted green, each car having a huge red cross on a white field. The interior was neat, the walls painted white as was most everything else. Each car held ten patients. On one side were six swing cots and on the other, four, with the orderly's pantry in the center.

When we were all on board the train backed up to Roulers and Menin to get some more patients, mostly Germans.

"Where are we going?" we asked the orderly.

He was from Hamburg and in pre-war days had worked for different steamship companies and spoke English fluently.

"I do not know, but we have sufficient food for four days," was his reply.

For forty-eight hours we were in Belgium, passing through Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Liege and Namur.

The second night we crossed the frontier at Aachen, Aix-la-Chapelle, and were at last in Germany.

About eleven-thirty the next morning the orderly told us to get ready.

"We are nearing Hanover," he said, "and that is our destination."

"Will we get there before dinner?" we asked.

The meals on the train had been fairly good and we were naturally interested.

"We are almost there now," was the answer, and almost at once we were in the suburbs, and just at twelve we rolled into the large covered-in station at Hanover City.

## CHAPTER VI

### AT HANOVER

WE were soon surrounded by an admiring and gaping crowd, made up largely of women. There were a few men, but they were old and unfit for military service. One of these constituted himself a committee of inquiry and all eyes were turned toward him when, speaking first in French, he asked if we were Belgian civilians. One of our men replied that we were English-Canadians. The ancient Hanoverian looked at us for a moment in blank amazement. Then in English, asked:

"But has Germany captured Canada? We have not heard any word of it."

"No, not yet."

"But what are you? You are not soldiers."

"Yes," we replied. "We are soldiers though we don't look it."

"But you can not be soldiers and wear civilian clothes." And then a great light dawned on him.

"I have it," he cried. "You have been cut off

from America by our submarines and can not get cloth, and so they have to send you to France in anything they can get." He was delighted, and so were we.

Turning to his compatriots, he told them the good news, to their apparent pleasure. We let it go at that.

Just then an officer appeared on the scene and the crowd quickly scattered.

When we arrived we had been taken to a room in the station on the street level, that was used as a Red Cross depot. Here the canteen workers gave us each a mug of coffee and a sausage sandwich. Some of us who hadn't had much appetite for breakfast were rather hungry, but we had learned from experience not to ask for more.

There were no ambulances in Hanover City, so the wounded were taken to the different hospitals in specially fitted street-cars. Of course this was slow work.

"I wonder where they raised the scare-crows," one of the boys asked, referring to the stretcher-bearers.

"Scare-crows" was certainly an apt name for them, for a more nondescript bunch I have yet to see. Some wore ragged uniforms, some even worse civies, some were tall and some short, but all were thin, sickly and pale, and looked out on the world through thick glasses of the German professor type.

At last the Huns had been sent to their respective hospitals, leaving only the *Englanders* to be removed. Those of us who could sit up were put in an ordinary street-car; the others into the Red Cross car.

While passing through the streets I kept my eyes open as I knew, or at least hoped, it would be a long time before I should again see the free city of Hanover. In front of a butcher's shop was a long line of women would-be customers, but the doors were not yet opened for business. On the surface the town was apparently fairly busy, but most of the traffic was human; there were neither horses nor automobiles. Until I got back to Aachen, months later, I saw but one motor.

Before the war it was an ordinary thing to see a farmer bringing his produce to market in a cart

drawn by his wife and his dog. To-day the only difference is that the dog has disappeared. There is a food shortage in Germany, you know.

The absence of men, of course, was conspicuous. Women, women everywhere, but not a man in sight. Women in the stores and factories, and on the farms, women cleaning the streets, women letter-carriers, women messengers, women porters, women conductors and street-car drivers and railroad hands. Without its women Germany would long ago have perished.

"This is rather an old town," I said to Nevers.

Whereupon one of the stretcher-bearers gave us considerable information as to the size and importance of Hanover. Fortunately I had not spoken disrespectfully of the town, but the incident taught me a lesson and never after that did I open my mouth about anything when traveling.

Our hospital was three blocks from the car line, so that the stretcher-bearers had to carry those that could not walk. I did not envy the spectacled ones for whatever may be said of a Canadian, he can not be called a light-weight.

The hospital was a large stone building, three stories high, covered with vines, and architecturally gloomy and forbidding. We entered through a gate in the center of the building, that opened on a small court. Then the gates closed behind us and it was many a month before I again passed through them.

The hospital, formerly an officers' training school, was built with two small spurs running from the main building. Between these spurs was the cobblestone court. Across it and facing the gate were the officers' quarters. Next to them was a long low plaster structure that was to be our future home.

The interior was cold and discouraging. The walls had once been white, the floor of heavy planks. Two large semi-porcelain stoves, one at each end, supplied the heat, or were intended to. Twenty-seven beds, along one wall and the far end; twenty-seven chairs and twenty-seven lockers comprised the furnishings of the ward. The beds were all sizes and shapes, some with springs but the majority springless. Those that were without had small



square mattresses or "biscuits" as the boys called them.

As soon as we were in the wards, the *feldwebel* ordered all who were able to take a bath. He didn't have to repeat the order.

"I never knew water could feel so good," shouted Nevers, with his mouth full of soap as he splashed under the shower. This soap had been supplied us by the Belgian nuns. There isn't enough in Germany to wash a baby.

"You will turn all clothing into the stores to be kept until you leave," was the next order.

I was willing to part permanently with mine.

Then we were issued hospital clothing, a suit of cotton underwear, a pair of socks, very much darned, and heelless hospital slippers in which we shuffled around for weeks before we acquired the art of keeping them on. The hospital suit was of a blue and white striped washable material. The tunic, reaching to below the knees, had one button at the top and was fastened at the waist by a cord.

"Hello, boys. What are you all? Canadians?"

It was a treat to hear some one speak English without an accent.

"Yes," we hastened to assure the stranger, who, like ourselves, was a prisoner.

"Good! So am I. Captured at St. Eloi, last April. My name's Temple, and this is my friend Spears."

We all gathered around as there was much we wanted to learn about our new home.

"It's certainly good to see you fellows," said Temple, "and we are going to ask you about a million questions. We get so little news—and it's all bad news—that we don't know what's going on or how the war is progressing."

And then they began and kept it up until we were forced to stop to have our hair clipped.

"How's the food here?" was the first question I asked when I got a chance at Spears. Spears came from Winnipeg and I felt that I knew him as we lived only six hundred miles apart.

"Food not very good here," was his cheerful rejoinder. "You arrived too late for coffee, and there will be nothing until five o'clock. But you are in luck, as it's soup night and we will get a full bowl."

"Have any of you fellows written home yet?" asked Temple.

"Well, we sent a card from Courtrai, but that is all."

"I'll go see the mail man and tell him you are all broke, and see if I can't get him to issue cards all around."

He presently came back with twenty-seven cards, one for each of us.

"Have any of you advised the Red Cross of your whereabouts?" was his next question. "Because if you haven't I would advise you to send your first card there. They will notify your 'next of kin,' and will also put your name on the parcel list so you'll receive a parcel once a week and two loaves of bread. Mine has just begun to come and let me tell you, boys, you will need every bit of food you can get in this dump. So take my tip and write the Red Cross." And we did.

At five o'clock came soup! "Soup, soup, beautiful soup." It was pea soup. The kind that comes in packages and water is all that is required. It was very salty but we were hungry and didn't mind.

After supper the *feldwebel* arrived with a staff of assistants and the never failing questionnaire, which we answered as seemed wisest, and went to bed.

## CHAPTER VII

### A SECOND HELPING

No. 5 Reserve Lazarett was the name of the Hanover hospital. It is probably one of the worst places into which any government, civilized or Kultured, could have put wounded men. This hospital specialized in one of the most loathsome and contagious of all the diseases mankind is heir to. There were over five hundred German soldiers under treatment when we arrived. It is always crowded to overflowing, for this ancient disease is rampant in the German army. At one time there were so many victims that seven of them were put in the same ward with us. We not only had the misery caused by insufficient food and the suffering from our wounds to bear, but there was the continual and deadly fear that we might contract this disease. It was a ghastly and ever-threatening menace. A Frenchman became infected while we were there and died. The Germans gave him a military funeral. It is about the only thing they do give us.

In the mornings when we went to the operating-room to have our wounds dressed, we came in direct touch with these patients. Our bandages would be taken off and our wounds exposed to this germ-laden atmosphere; the Germans receiving treatment at the same time. To add to our anxiety the bandages were not new but rewashed, possibly sterilized, but I have rolled too many to have much faith in them.

In a hospital of this character—or lack of it—there are no nurses. We had an orderly but he was suffering from heart disease, and further, did not believe in working when there were so many *Englanders* around. So we practically had to do all the work of the ward. Twenty of the boys were bed cases and could do nothing; in fact they required daily attention themselves, which of course we gave and gave cheerfully, but none of them should have been without the care of a nurse. This left seven more or less able-bodied men to do all this work. We had the huge ward to sweep, mop and keep clean, the beds to make, the boys to wash and tend, the coal to carry in and anything else the Germans

wanted us to do. All this by seven fellows, four of whom, like myself, had been wounded in the arm and could do little.

The food in Hanover was hardly what you'd call adequate. Three and a half ounces of black war bread was our daily ration—our all-daily ration. It was rather bitter and in less than two days would be green with mold. But we never gave it a chance to change its color. We became expert bread cutters, eventually carving very small pieces into twelve or fourteen slices. We did not get any more nourishment out of it, of course, but it went farther.

In addition to the bread we had two small rolls and a mug of coffee for each. The rolls were about the size of a bantam egg. The coffee was coffee in name only, being burnt barley and skim milk, without sugar. It was a vile and bitter concoction but in time we got used to it.

We seldom used the bread for breakfast, which was at seven, but contented ourselves with the rolls and coffee. At nine came another meal, consisting of three small fish, each about the size of a sardine, but unfortunately for us, they were uncooked. Not

liking this German delicacy, we gave it to the Russians, a number of whom we had with us. On other days we had Hartzen Casine and then every one was delighted, for the Russians did not like this dish and so would pay us back for the three small fishes.

This Hartzen Casine is a small cheese; small but very powerful. If the Germans were half as efficient as they think they are they would have developed Hartzen Casine gas, and ended the war long ago.

There was a good deal of work to be done on this cheese before it was ready to be eaten. First: remove the major portion, which was mold. Second: remove a thick and uneatable coating of jelly. When these operations had been performed, we had left a small piece of white crumbly cheese, an eighth of an inch thick and about the size of a fifty-cent piece. Its strength was not impaired by these operations.

"Who is going to fix my cheese?" I would ask.

"Beat it!" "I've enough work to do this morning." "Let George do it." "Send it to the operating room," were some of the answers I would receive.

At last I would light on one of the cripples.

"Why pick on me?" he'd shout.

"Because I have you where I want you," I'd reply. "If you don't fix this mess I won't wash you to-morrow."

It required two hands to prepare this dainty dish; one to manipulate the fork, the other to hold the nose.

Sometimes I wondered if it was worth the trouble, but it gave us something to do and to fuss about even if it did not appease the pangs of hunger.

The big meal of the day, the one we looked forward to, came at eleven-thirty. Thirty minutes in advance we would all gather in mass formation about the door, keeping one eye on the clock and the other on the orderlies. Finally half a bowl of soup would arrive. Now the British blockade has undoubtedly been a great success, but it has been powerless to stop the importation of water, and most of it gets into the soup.

Every day the soup changed, with two meatless days a week. Monday was bean; Tuesday was meatless; a low grade of prunes and rice were issued. It usually went by the name of "Snowballs and



Prunes." Wednesday, cabbage and a fish sausage; Thursday, fresh vegetables; Friday, another meatless day, was the big treat of the week. For once the diet changed and we had solids. Two small potatoes, with mustard sauce and fish. The Germans got the tails and we the heads. It was always the same kind of fish. I do not know what kind but it was never fresh, having been kept in storage for a considerable length of time. Saturday, back to soup again. This time barley, and on Sunday fresh vegetables.

At three o'clock coffee was again served, and at five came supper. Three days in the week it was a bowl of soup, served under many different names but always the same flavor. It was filling, for a short time, but there was no nourishment in it.

The other days in the week we had an inch of sausage, or a small piece of corned beef, or a bit of violent cheese. And so we had five meals a day, yet there wasn't enough in them all, in nourishment, at least, to equal half an ordinary, home-grown meal. We were actually hungrier after dinner than before and there was nothing to do about it except tighten

your belt and crawl back in bed in the hope of forgetting your unsatisfied hunger in sleep.

To be continually underfed, continually hungry, is to suffer continually and miserably. Actual starvation is said to be rather pleasant, but they wouldn't let us starve, just gave us enough to keep us conscious of our lack all the time. One of their meals only fed the longing and aggravated the suffering.

It was not easy to get to sleep. Twelve o'clock would often find us twisting and tossing. Presently a voice in the darkness would cry out:

"Gee, but I wish I had a tin of that bully beef that we used to build the parapet of."

And then the chorus would start:

"Say, wouldn't some of those old biscuits and a tin of jam, even Tickler's marmalade, go great now?"

"Yes, or a bit of that cheese that we used to feed the rats."

Until finally some poor kid's imagination would run away with him, and he would break in with:

"How would you like a nice thick beef-steak?"

This was too much and groans would come from every bed in the ward.

At last I would drop into a fitful sleep, haunted by visions of beautiful meals. I would imagine myself at home. I could even smell the delicious aroma from the kitchen and would wait impatiently until all was on the table and I was about to sit down, when:

*“Los! Los! Engländer. Raus mit dir,”* and I would be rudely snatched from Canada and transported back into Germany, hungrier than ever.

According to The Hague Convention, prisoners are supposed to receive the same rations as the troops of the country, but if the German soldiers had to fight on the rations that were issued to us the war would soon be over.

Bennett, who usually acted as the food orderly, took particular notice of the rations issued to the Germans.

“They get six ounces of black bread, a full bowl of soup and can come back for a second helping,” was his report. “But they never go back on Tuesdays,” he added.

"Next Tuesday," one of the boys said, "I am going back for another helping. I don't care what they do to me."

"Well, they can't more than shoot you."

"I'd rather be dead than the way I am," he fired back.

So when next Tuesday came around and its usual prunes and rice with it, this orderly, true to his threat, went back for more, while the rest of us waited in fear and trembling with visions of *clique* and other terrible forms of punishment. But soon we saw him coming back with a dish in his hand and a smile on his lips.

"Did you get it?" we cried.

"You bet! And there is lots more left and no Fritzie's back."

Well, you could not see the rest of us for dust, we were so promptly on our way. Those who were in bed sent their bowls along and everybody was happy.

We had started something and were determined to follow it up. So the next day we went down again, but we should have known better, for it was

Wednesday with the delicious German delicacy, fish sausage and cabbage. When we got to the kitchen there was a long line of Germans and the thing looked hopeless, but we fell in at the rear.

Step by step we got closer and closer to the door and at last our front man reached the serving table. The cook looked us over for a moment and then conferred with an under-officer who was standing by.

*"Nicht, Engländer! Los!"*

And we "lossed" without our second helping.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCERT AT SEVEN

"I WONDER what all the excitement is about," I asked Nevers.

Orderlies were rushing here and there, extra beds were being brought into the ward, also clean linen, and hospital clothing.

"Must have been another German victory," he replied, and the arrival later of thirty wounded, muddy and bearded Englishmen proved he was correct. They presented a sorry plight, but they looked good to us.

"Hello, mates! Where are you from?"

Their faces lit up with a smile to hear an English greeting.

"Hello, yourself," yelled a grinning Irishman. "We are from the Big Push. They got us at Gommecourt. What are you?"

"Canadians. Captured at Ypres."

"How's the food?"

Just then the *feldwebel* arrived and they were taken to the different wards.

We were eager for news so we followed them to the bathroom.

"Was the fleet badly beaten at Jutland?" we asked.

"Beaten! lad," said a grizzled old engineer from Norfolk. "Not yet. Fritz ran off when the Grand Fleet arrived. He could not stay and finish the fight; had a more pressing engagement in the Kiel Canal. But by gum, we sure gave them it at Gommecourt."

Then followed an interesting story of that fight, during which we impolitely broke in with questions about the naval battle, until by degrees we got both stories.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Canadian soldier is a very inquisitive fellow, always looking around and investigating. The first day we were at Hanover, we inspected the lockers and unearthed a deck of cards. Those cards were a godsend. Without them I don't know how we could have killed the time. There were twenty-seven of

us and we found it impossible to devise a game in which we could all join in. So the first thing in the morning we cut the deck for turns to use the cards. When I left Hanover the pack was dirty, limp, torn and the spots almost worn off from continual playing, but it was still in use.

"Do you sing?" I looked up from the book I was reading to see our chief musician, an Englishman who had been captured at Mons. He had purchased a guitar, and had proudly learned to play a few tunes that were very much out of date.

"No," I replied.

"It doesn't make any difference because I have put your name down anyway."

"What's the big idea?" I asked.

"Some of the boys are leaving for camp to-morrow, so I thought we might have a concert to celebrate the occasion."

"All right then. I'll sing. Who else have you got?"

"Haven't very many yet."

"Well, let's form a committee and do it right."

So the committee was formed and all the different



nationalities interviewed, a program was drawn up and every one notified that the big event would take place that night in the "Casino," the ward across the court from ours.

At seven prompt the concert began. There were British, French, Russian and Belgians in the audience and each was represented on the program. Nobody understood half of what was going on, but all enjoyed it immensely. Zappfe on our side rendered *Mr. Cohen at the Telephone* and had to repeat. Moore was a splendid singer and was called on for more than one number and there were some instrumentals by the Russians and French that were bully. Everything was running smoothly and quietly, no applause being permitted, when suddenly the door opened and in walked the *feldwebel* and his able assistants. He was the maddest Hun I ever saw.

"If you ever have another of these things, you will all be severely punished." And he ordered us to bed.

There was little or no amusement at Hanover and no chance for exercise, although the grounds around the hospital were rather extensive. They were not

for the prisoners. We were confined to a small area, possibly a hundred yards long by about fifty wide and under no circumstances were we to stray beyond that into the *verboten* space. Two sentries marched up and down day and night to see that we did not trespass.

But the bad weather kept us indoors much of the time. If it was not raining it was too cold to go out in our thin hospital clothing. As I came from the home of bad weather, "Medicine Hat," I was of course to blame for it all. I was even accused of having brought it in in tabloid form.

"Come, Rossiter, have a heart," I would be told. "We don't mind an occasional storm, but this continual rain — — — — —!"

The first few days were fine; so good in fact, that the senior *feldwebel* could not resist the temptation to crow over the splendid harvest they were going to have, but he didn't crow long.

The *feldwebel* was a minister before the war, so we promptly dubbed him "Old Brother Baptist." If he is a sample of the German "cloth" it's not surprising that the lay Hun is brutal.

“Why does England waste her time trying to starve us?” he asked us one morning. “You can see for yourselves that she will never succeed. We have plenty to eat. Only last week I was permitted to go through the harvest fields to see the wonderful crops. The crops that our Lord has blessed us with so that we shall not starve, and England’s sinful plan shall fail. He will not let us go hungry, for our cause is just. Our God will not let you defeat us. Our God is a good God.”

Translate “good” to mean Prussian, and you have it.

During the cold days we spent as much time as possible around the fire in the boiler room. It was a very small room but it was the only place that was warm—as there were no fires in the ward—and we could smoke there, which we could not in the ward. Because they could always find the English in the boiler room, the Germans named it the “Englanders’ Villa.” Here we would talk of everything under the sun—art, books, religion, politics, the war, the prospect of getting home, but always we’d end by talking about food. Tobacco was very scarce.

There was none issued, as in Allied hospitals, and it was extremely difficult to purchase any. The Germans had a canteen but at first they refused to sell to the English. The French and Russians were permitted to buy but—*Gott strafe England!* This was our punishment for declaring war on gentle Germany. We tried to get the orderlies to purchase it for us, but they charged such heavy premiums that our pocketbooks could not stand the pressure. Then we were reduced to collecting the butts that were thrown away, and making them into cigarettes. One fellow used to get up at six in the morning so as to be first on the tobacco field.

At last the Germans gave us permission to buy at the canteen but it was of little value as they were out of tobacco. The bed cases had a rather hard time because "any one caught smoking in the ward will forfeit his dinner." One fellow would stand guard at the door and give warning while the poor devils would get a puff or two.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I want some Englishmen to work in the kitchen."

"Englanders' Villa" was crowded that morning.

In the doorway stood a tall angular person in his shirt-sleeves, an apron tied around his waist; the usual German fatigue cap on his head.

"I am the cook and require some assistance in the kitchen," he again informed us.

"What do we have to do?"

"Peel potatoes and generally assist me in my work."

Four of the boys immediately volunteered.

"Well, I don't envy the cook his job," one of the boys laughed. "He'll have his hands full getting any work out of that bunch."

There were Blaxland, a Canadian from Regina, who lost an eye at Ypres and never could see any work with the other; "Big Slim" Mellors and Wardle, both English, formerly with the Notts and Derby Regiments, very strong as to accent, but stronger still at dodging work, and last but not least, Burke, as Irish as a peat bog and as idle as Irish. The cook was surely up against it.

Now in the British Army we never steal. It is considered bad form. We merely "rustle." In our battalion a chap was not considered a "full buck

private" unless he was a good "rustler." Of course we must never rustle from our own company. That is the worst of crimes. But it is perfectly legitimate to rustle from another company or battalion.

The men of this voluntary quartette were artists, heroes, every one. They led that cook a dog's life. What they did not know about the gentle art of pilfering was not worth knowing. If the cook left anything lying around it mysteriously disappeared; anything from a potato to a bottle of "Pilzener." They were not particular, and although they helped the cook, they undoubtedly helped themselves much better.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Say, Bennett, can you give me a shave this afternoon?"

"Sure; as soon as I finish dinner, I'll borrow the razor from the Russians. Have you any soap?"

"I have part of the cake I got at Courtrai."

"Well, I guess it will do."

The razor was dull so we stroped it on the leather top of a crutch and Bennett began pulling out my beard by the roots. One side of my face was finally

clean and Bennett was about to begin on the other, when the *feldwebel* appeared.

"There is to be an inspection to-morrow morning. This ward must be spotlessly clean. Every one must work at once."

"But I haven't finished shaving," Bennett remonstrated.

"Never mind. Put that razor away at once."

And half shaved, I began to work, and work it was. The *feldwebel* rushed in and out, always in a towering rage. Nothing satisfied him. The whole ward had to be swept and then mopped, regardless of the fact that it had been mopped that morning. The sides of the beds had to be washed, the windows cleaned inside and out, the walls brushed and scrubbed; and new paper put in the lockers.

"You can have no supper until the whole ward is finished."

We redoubled our efforts and about seven o'clock the place was spotless and the *feldwebel* left us with dire warnings as to what he would do to us if the ward was the least bit disarranged when he came the next morning. We tumbled out of bed at five-

thirty, but he was not satisfied, and we had to do much of the job again.

"The inspecting general will be here at eleven-thirty. No one will leave the ward until after the inspection," were his parting orders.

"I'll bet you he does not come for three or four days," said the cheerful pessimist. "I know these guys. And when he does come he will only glance at the ward and walk out."

For two more days we had the ordeal to go through and at last he arrived, and the pessimist was right: he merely glanced at the ward and passed on.

It was amusing to watch the officers. I have never seen men so servile as those officers were to the inspecting general—amusing and disgusting.

For our diligent work we were rewarded with butter for our next day's bread, but it proved another disappointment. It wasn't fit for axle grease.



## CHAPTER IX

### AN IDEA OF HEAVEN

DINNER was finished, the dishes were washed; dish cloths hung up to dry; every one was lying down and all was quiet in the ward except for the occasional snore.

In walked the cook.

"I want all Englishmen who can use two hands, to come to the kitchen at once. Ten baskets of peas have arrived and must be shelled for dinner to-morrow," he growled.

"How many, Cook?" we asked.

"All who are able."

There was a sudden exodus of Englishmen, some on crutches, others hobbling with a stick, but all apparently anxious to get to the kitchen quickly and assist the cook.

"Why this sudden burst of enthusiasm?" I inquired of Nevers. We were in the one-hand class.

"I have never seen them show such willingness to work before."

"Have you forgotten the pockets in their tunics?" laughed Nevers. I had. I had seen enough of army life to know that the average soldier never wants to work unless there is some motive behind it—and there was in this case.

All afternoon they worked diligently, and the cook was more than satisfied. So were the boys. If that stupid German chef had noticed the pockets of his assistants as they left the kitchen he would have turned to a raging lion; because as fast as they shelled for him they shelled also for themselves.

One of the jobs that had been wished on us was that of keeping the water heated for the shower bath, so when word reached us of what was going on in the kitchen, we got a large supply of coal on hand in readiness.

The pea shellers were back in time for supper. Fortunately it was soup night and we were able to save our bread.

After we had souped, in came a crowd of Germans

to use the baths. This upset our plans considerably, but there was nothing to do but wait. We had built a big fire and the water was extra hot, and it seemed as if the Germans would never leave. And when they finally went they actually complimented us on the hot water.

When the last German had gone and two of the boys were put on guard, the excitement began. We had only one infantry mess tin but from seven-thirty until nine-thirty that quart can worked overtime, believe me. We had no butter, nor any salt or pepper—just dry black bread and peas, but I have never tasted such a heavenly meal.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Have you met the new guy over in the Casino?”

I hadn’t, and said so.

“He is pretty badly knocked out and can’t get around at all.”

Grant was his name, I learned when a little later I went to see him. He was badly wounded at the Second Battle of Ypres; was captured and had been a prisoner then for over eighteen months, most of the time in bed. Even at that he was wonderfully

cheery. His leg had been broken and never properly healed, and now he had been sent to Hanover hospital for an examination; after which he was to be forwarded to Switzerland.

“Do you play bridge?”

I could hardly believe my ears.

“Did you say ‘bridge’? Because if you did, you and I are going to have a fine time, if we can get a couple of partners.”

Fortunately Grant had a pack of cards of his own so we wouldn’t have to cut the old deck for a chance to play.

My hunt for bridge players proved successful. First I got Zappfe, an Ontario boy, who joined the McGill University Company, and was then drafted to the Princess Pats; served with them for just one year in France and had been captured in the same battle at which I had the misfortune to be taken.

Next I rounded up “Slim” Moore. Slim because of his height. Carey was a Londoner, quiet, well read, and a most agreeable partner at any game. He had been captured at Gommecourt, on the Somme.

Life soon became one bridge tournament after another. We played from nine-thirty in the morning until dinner, and after, didn't play only because we slept to forget our hunger, but at seven the game began again and continued until ten, when it was lights out for the night.

"I am going to beat it in a few days for Switzerland," said Grant one evening as we began a new rubber. "So let's get in as many games as we can before I go."

The playing began and the bidding was brisk and the playing hard. We noticed that Moore and Temple, two chaps who usually hung around the table and entertained us, were conspicuous by their absence. Grant seemed a bit excited.

"I wonder what has happened to them," said Zappfe. But Grant made no reply.

At nine o'clock their absence was explained. In they walked, loaded down with all sorts of good things to eat. Grant and Temple, it seemed, had received a number of parcels that afternoon, one of them being from Temple's grandmother in Canada.

Plates, cups and spoons were brought from the

pantry, and the party was on. If the table had not been of heavy German construction it might well have "groaned" or at least it looked that way to us who hadn't seen much to eat for so long.

"Go to it, boys," said Temple, and we needed no second invitation.

We stopped in the middle of a game, intending to finish later, but that game will never be finished. The players have scattered in various directions. Grant and I are out of Germany, while the others are still there but in different camps. Perhaps one day we shall meet in some corner of the world and take up our hands.

The meal none of us will ever forget, I am sure. There was soup to start with—real tomato soup that had come all the way from Canada in tins; this was followed by kippered herring, New Zealand rabbit, corn, pork and beans, toast, prepared mustard from Canada, cake, real Canadian cookies, shelled nuts, candy and tea. It was a tinned meal, to be sure, but oh, it was good! If Temple's grandmother could only have seen us; as it was, her ears must have burned.

Everything was devoured. We "licked the platter clean." Then when the dishes were washed and put away, Temple produced a package of cigars! Can you beat it!

"That meal is my idea of Heaven," said one of the boys. The rest of us put in on this and then we all sat around and smoked in silence.

"Did you fellows notice the circle of hungry eyes about us?" I asked.

We had scarcely enough for our own little crowd and at that only a taste for each. The other fellows, much as they tried, could not help watching us as we ate.

No one can describe that terrible wolfish look that comes into the eyes of the man who is desperately hungry. I have been among those who have had to look on, and I know what the feelings are. I have tried not to watch but there is some awful fascination that compels one to look against one's will. There is nothing to my mind that equals the torture of being hungry and having to watch others eat. Germany knows this, and uses it as one of her most effective methods in subduing prisoners.

It was beginning to get dark, so after finding Strebbling's guitar hidden away behind the pantry, we had a quiet little sing-song. Thousands of miles from home, yet with all our thoughts over there, we sang the old favorites, until it grew dark, when we returned the guitar to its hiding-place and just talked.

Little did we know that this was to be the last time when we should all be together. The next day good old cheerful, bedridden Grant left for Switzerland, Moore and Carey for the camp, and Nevers went too, leaving only Zappfe, Temple and myself of the old gang.

When ten o'clock came that night we dispersed to our wards, expecting to go to sleep for once without feeling the terrible pangs of hunger. But that was where we made a mistake. We couldn't get to sleep for thinking about that wonderful meal.

Twelve o'clock struck. Twelve-thirty; two.

"I distinctly heard three," answered Zappfe, when we talked it over the next morning, "but late as it was I think I'd be willing to risk it again."

To which we all agreed.



## CHAPTER X

### VISITING DAY

AFTER the departure of Grant, Nevers and Moore, life resumed its former monotony. No more bridge or evening sing-songs and days seemed weeks, and weeks were as months.

One day our dinner had just been served when in rushed the doctor accompanied by the *unter officier* of the ward and a retinue of dressers from the operation-room. "Attention!" he cried, and we all sprang to attention at the end of our beds. The doctor examined the wounds of each prisoner, giving me special attention, seemingly in doubt and coming back a second time. Then he left without a word of explanation.

"I wonder what it's for?" was on everybody's lips.

"No doubt an examination for camp," was the general explanation.

"You're all wrong," said one; "I'm willing to bet that it's an English exchange."

And he won. Late that afternoon four of the boys were warned that they were to leave the next day for England.

There was great excitement and rejoicing in the ward that night. We all had messages to send home—messages that we were well, but required a steady supply of parcels. I felt a little disappointed as I had been hoping that I might be on the next exchange; but I consoled myself with the thought that I should get to Switzerland.

The boys left the next day, and the ward was quieter than ever. When Grant left he assigned his parcels to Zappfe and me, as did Cowely, one of those who had gone on the English exchange. Neither of us had a supply coming through as yet, so we both looked eagerly forward to the arrival of the parcels that had been left to us. But days passed before we received notice of the arrival of two for Grant. We could hardly wait for five o'clock to come; all day we dreamed of the extra meal we were going to have. But our dreams came

to naught. On finally opening the parcels, we found they contained bread, but it had been so long on the way that it was simply a mass of mold. Our disappointment was bitter. We cut each loaf into many slices and succeeded in getting a few small morsels, that were only yellow instead of green. By toasting them over a hot fire we were able to burn away part of the mold, so that they were at least eatable.

When we had sent off the cards to the Red Cross, on our arrival, we knew that it would take at least five weeks before we could possibly receive a reply. But when seven weeks passed and no parcels, the disappointment was keen and the suspense awful. One or two letters had straggled through from England, when one morning Rosie, the mail orderly, appeared in the ward with a good-sized bundle. At last, we all thought, here is mail for every one. It has all come in a bunch. We crowded around Rosie. Hopes were high. He began to call one chap's name. Ten letters! Our spirits began to droop; then fifteen; the sixteenth was for another. Our spirits rose. Eighteen, and on to thirty for the first fellow. We had almost given up hope by this time.

Thirty-seven—and he had finished—all for one fellow. We were almost desperate.

“Are you sure there are no more?” we cried.

“I’m very sorry,” he replied; “that’s all.”

For once we were mad, and mad clean through. Thirty-seven letters and all for one man! It was too much. Our envy knew no bounds. We stood and glowered at him who was so fortunate.

“Come, Zappfe,” I said; “let’s get out of here. I can’t stand it any longer.”

“Same here,” replied Zappfe. “If I don’t get a letter before long I’ll do something desperate. I wouldn’t care if a sentry put a bullet through me right now.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Where is the Frenchman?” I inquired one morning at the Casino. “The screens are gone and his bed is empty.”

“He died last night and is to be buried this afternoon,” was the reply.

This Frenchman had been a prisoner for a long time in Germany and while working in a factory received an injury and was sent to this hospital for

treatment. Here he contracted, through his wound, the dread disease for which this hospital had been set aside, and that was his end.

"They are getting ready for the funeral," I was told later in the day.

The coffin, of varnished pine with silver handles, was resting on a stand made in the form of a cross, which was draped with black velvet. It was in the open, under the spreading trees. A beautiful silk French flag was thrown over the coffin—the tri-color for which he had fought so well. At the head were three lighted candles, the flames waving a little in the breeze that rustled the tree-tops. At the foot were two wreaths—loving tributes of his comrades, while on the coffin rested a crucifix. Everything was quiet and peaceful. The prisoner had secured his release from captivity. He had gone where there was no more torture, pain or starvation—peace at last.

The French in the hospital were allowed to attend the funeral which was held in the afternoon. The Seventy-third Hanover Regiment Band led, then came the hearse, followed by his sorrowing com-

rades. A firing party, supplied by the same regiment, brought up the rear. The little Frenchman was buried with full military honors. Only in death does Germany recognize a prisoner of war as a soldier.

\* \* \* \* \*

A game of five hundred was in progress. A crowd was looking on.

"I'll go six clubs," said Zappfe.

"Six hearts," was Dyer's contribution.

"I'm passing," from Blaxland.

"Nullo," was my bid. Zappfe raised it in clubs and the bid was his.

"*Achtung!*" ordered a stern voice. We all sprang to our beds. In the doorway stood the sergeant of the ward, accompanied by a stranger.

"I am from Switzerland," he informed us, "sent here by my government, to see if you as prisoners are properly attended to."

He made an inspection of the ward, asking us many questions.

"Where are you boys from?" he inquired.

"From Canada."

"Is that so? I have been there often. I was in New York last year. I suppose you would not mind being there right now."

We assured him that we would not object in the least.

Before leaving Hanover he sent us a number of copies of the *New York World*. They were over three months old, but that made no difference to us. We read every line—advertisements and all. For many days after that we amused ourselves by answering the "Help Wanted," and purchasing automobiles and motorcycles.

Another visitor was the Reverend Mr. Williams, formerly the English Church clergyman of Berlin. At present he has no church, but is doing far greater work, having been granted permission to visit the prisoners in the camps and hospitals. He was passing through Hanover and on learning that we were confined there, came to see us and was allowed to stay for nearly an hour. The *feldwebel* accompanied him to see that nothing objectionable was said. All war talk was forbidden. He told us many interesting stories about life in the camps, answering

the thousand different questions that we asked, always changing the conversation most diplomatically, when some too eager boy wanted to know about the war. He was very cheerful and inspiring.

Earlier in the afternoon, a daring raid had been made on the potato bin, as the result of which many of the lockers contained bowls of spuds which we were anxious the *feldwebel* should not discover. So it was with contrary emotions that we saw Mr. Williams depart—one of regret at his leaving and the other of relief that the *feldwebel* accompanied him.

Friday was visiting day for the Germans, when the women would spend two hours—from two to four in the afternoon—with their men-folk. This was the one thing that the Germans looked forward to; mothers to visit their sons, wives their husbands, and sweethearts to beguile a few hours with their best young men. The mothers and wives were quite content to wear last year's clothes, but the girls were always dressed their best to look good in the eyes of their adored ones. The older women had banned Paris fashions, but not so the younger ones.



Berlin has done its utmost to dictate fashion to the *fräulein*, but Paris still holds her affections.

The wives always presented a sad sight. They would arrive with a small parcel for their husbands, containing tobacco and cigarettes; but when they left they carried away with them one much larger, containing bread—bread that had been saved from their men's rations. Starvation had put its indelible stamp upon the faces of these women, and upon their children. I could not but feel sorry for these little ones, with their wasted bodies, and sunken eyes, showing the terrible effects of malnutrition. These kiddies were so hungry they often came to the hospitals with pails to get some soup, and have even gone to the barbed wires around the camp, to ask the hated *Englander* for bread.

While I have sympathy for the German children, I have none for the women. The German soldiers have committed the foulest deeds and the worst atrocities that the world has ever known, and the women are fit mates for these men.

Kipling's claim that "the female of the species

is more deadly than the male" is certainly borne out by the German women, who never lose an opportunity to vent their spite on us, in the vilest of vile language, often throwing things at us, and even spitting on us. These we can forget and forgive, as they are actuated by ignorant prejudice; but what was done to our wounded prisoners in 1914 can never be forgiven. In those days they were packed tight into dirty cattle trucks, without seats, and with scarcely space to stand. The doors were closed and locked, so there was little or no air, and thus they were shunted about Belgium and Germany. At many stops in Germany, they were forced from the cars, frequently with the liberal use of the butt end of the rifle, to face large crowds of excited women, clamoring for a chance to get at the *schwein-hund*. There were some who, knowing we were suffering all the agonies of thirst, went about with pails of water, inquiring in the softest and kindest of tones if we were thirsty. Then they would offer us a cup of water, but just as we were about to drink, these she-devils would empty the water on the ground.

Orders were received one morning for a party of six of us to leave for camp. This caused great excitement. We rushed up three flights of stairs to the store room and drew out our clothes; we packed up our small belongings, turned in our hospital clothes, and waited for the guards who were to come at three o'clock. After dinner we went toward the kitchen to see if we could get a second helping, as it was Tuesday, when suddenly the *feldwebel* appeared in the square, accompanied by two sentries with fixed bayonets, who immediately charged us, driving us back into our ward. A sentry was then placed on guard at the door and we were ordered not to leave. No explanation was given at that time, but toward evening the sergeant in charge of the ward appeared, carrying two extra blankets and his outfit, and said:

"You are all in quarantine. Wilson has diphtheria and has been sent to another hospital. You must stay in this ward for one week—no one must leave."

For the next few hours every one was kept busy, as the ward and everything in it had to be thor-

oroughly washed and disinfected. When the work was finished to the satisfaction of the sergeant, then all bedding and clothing was turned in to be sent to the fumigator. The books were taken away from us and burned—in fact we were relieved of everything except a single deck of cards, which was our sole source of recreation and amusement that weary week, though they did not help much, as we were unable to devise any game that the whole party could play at once.

The week seemed interminable. There was nothing to relieve the monotony—none of the excitement of rustling; nothing to do but wait from one meal to another. The sergeant stayed right with us. Conversation was our only indoor sport.

One night we were gathered about the fire, discussing the ships on which we should like to return to Canada. One mentioned this ship and another that, but unfortunately somebody said the *Lusitania*. The sergeant, an educated man, had been listening. Upon hearing *Lusitania* his manner and face underwent a great change. He had a look of

unholy joy, as, with a sneer, he said; "Ha; the *Lusitania*—she's where she belongs—at the bottom of the sea—sunk by one of our glorious U-boats. That's what we intend to do with every boat that tries to cross the ocean."

We sat for a moment petrified. Here was absolute proof of their pride in this dastardly achievement and in evidence of which the sergeant produced a medal.

"Germany has struck that to commemorate this victory," he informed us. One side of it showed Death at the wicket, selling tickets to the fools who would travel on the Death Line. The reverse side showed the *Lusitania* taking its final plunge beneath the waves. The German people are proud of that "victory," proud of having attacked an unarmed merchant vessel, proud of having sent eleven hundred women and children to a watery grave.

When the *Deutschland* returned from its successful trip to America, the joy of the people knew no bounds. There was great rejoicing and flags were unfurled from the highest poles. The doctor could

not restrain his pride and satisfaction. "So, Britannia rules the waves," he derided us.

Temple replied diplomatically: "But Germany rules under the waves."

## CHAPTER XI

### PRISON CAMP

"BLAXLAND, McRae, Wardle, Markham, Martin and Rossiter will leave to-morrow for camp. The guards will arrive immediately after dinner."

Breakfast over, we began to pack our belongings. When we applied at the fumigator for our clothes we found that some one had been there ahead of us. Some had lost their tunics; others their trousers, in my case the boots were gone.

We explained our difficulty to the sergeant, who advised us to go to the inspector.

"What do you want?" the inspector asked.

"Some of our clothing has been stolen and we need new."

He immediately flew into a rage. "I have already outfitted you once!" he said; "you should have taken better care of your things."

We explained that we were not responsible and

after much grumbling he consented to give us what we required.

The other fellows were soon attended to, but there was great difficulty in filling my needs. Boots were scarce and none that he had would fit me. Then an orderly appeared with a message that the guards had arrived and were waiting—yet no clogs could be found among the prisoners' stores that fitted me, so in desperation the inspector drew upon the army supplies. The boots he issued to me were of the style worn by the German army: comfortable enough, with high tops, but very clumsy in appearance.

Then the *feldwebel* counted us, called the roll, and turned us over to the guards.

"Remember me to Moore when you get to camp," cried Zappfe.

"Give my regards to Nevers," from Dyer.

"Hope we'll soon be joining you," in chorus.

The guards counted us again, to be sure that we were all there, and ordered us to *marsch*. The gates opened and with a sigh of relief we turned our backs upon this "place of horrors" and stepped out into



the street, each one silently breathing a prayer that our comrades would soon follow.

This time we walked to the station and in the road, too, as the sidewalks are reserved for the Germans, not for the *schwein-hund*. We six presented a peculiar sight—no two dressed alike; one in khaki, one in civilians, another dressed as a Belgian, while my attire represented many different nationalities. The hearts of the populace must have beat with pride at this evidence of what their “glorious and unbeatable army” was accomplishing. They gathered about us, anxious to let us know what family or breed of pigs and dogs we were members of, calling us the vilest of vile names. To show further their contempt for *die Engländer*, and their own superiority, they spat upon us as we passed along.

No food was provided for our trip, but a party of English prisoners on the train shared their rations with us. At Celle we parted from them, we continuing our journey by train, while they walked to camp, a distance of six kilometers. They were being returned from a farm where they had been sent to work in the fields, the farmer claiming that

he wanted Russians because "*die Englishers* were too lazy and would perhaps destroy too much of his crop."

I have been in many of the Allies' camps where the Germans are interned, and have found they conform fully to the requirements of The Hague Convention. The barracks are clean and comfortable; each prisoner sleeps on a bed and is supplied with mattress, blankets and pillows. There are also chairs, lockers and tables for their own personal use. Prisoners are permitted to cultivate small garden patches, the seeds supplied by the Allied governments, who purchase the crops in the fall. Each camp has a Y. M. C. A., with the usual piano, gramophone, also books, magazines and the daily papers from Germany. There is also a canteen where they may purchase small delicacies. The rations are the same as issued to the army and in addition they are supplied with extras so dear to the German heart, such as sauerkraut and sausages; a half-pint of beer and cigarettes are also issued each day. Until recently German prisoners in England did not even have to work. As further proof of the con-

sideration shown them, the following speaks for itself:

The officer of the day was making his rounds, asking if there were any complaints. "Yes," said one of the prisoners; "we have a complaint to make. The sentry at night makes so much noise marching up and down that it is impossible for us to get to sleep."

The officer made note of this, reporting to the higher command, and in due course coco matting was laid to deaden the sound.

"Celle Lager" is situated six kilometers from the town of Celle, on a moor, surrounded by a state forest. It was the most dreary-looking place, with its unpainted buildings and barbed wire, that I ever saw. On one side of the road leading to the camp were the remains of former buildings, with very low canvas roofs, which looked as if they had seen considerable service previous to the building of the new barracks. Near the gate were the administration buildings and across from them the officers' barrack. It was neatly built and looked exceedingly comfortable with its vine-covered veranda and walls

and the garden in front. Facing the gate but about a hundred yards from it was the Parcel Office, which was conducted by a staff picked from the different nationalities, under the supervision of a senior *feldwebel*. From the main track to the Parcel Office was a narrow gauge railway on which the parcels were brought from the cars.

While waiting at the office I had a chance to view the camp from the outside. It was a large wire-encircled enclosure two hundred yards wide and four hundred yards long. The netting, about eight feet high, of very fine mesh, turned in at the top, and was buried some distance in the ground so there could be no danger of the prisoners digging their way out. It was all interlaced with many strands of barbed wire. In some of the camps this wire is electrically charged and prisoners must keep away, or they would be electrocuted.

At intervals of twenty-five feet were sentry boxes, or lookouts. These were built on high platforms, with ladders at the side, giving the sentries a clear view of the entire camp. At every box, and between them, was placed a high power arc light so that at

night the camp was brilliantly lighted. In addition to the electric light each box was equipped with acetylene gas lamps, in case at any time the power gave out. At the gate, inside and out, were two small sentry boxes painted in the usual German style—black and white stripes. The gates were double wired and padlocked, with a sentry marching inside and out.

From the gate running through the middle of the camp was a wide thoroughfare, in the center of which were placed the roofed stands holding ladders and fire-fighting apparatus. Between each stand were small plots of grass and a few trees, which helped to relieve the monotony of the general surroundings. This road also separated the two regiments, or groups of huts, into which the *lager* was divided.

The barracks were long low structures, built on a foundation of brick a few feet above the ground, unpainted, and of a rather dirty appearance. There were fifty buildings to a regiment, ten in a row and five deep. Outside on the left was another large enclosure, in which were the barracks of the soldiers

in training. A portion of this also was used as a parade ground for the prisoners on special occasions, such as Sunday inspections. On the right in another enclosure was a long white building. This was the *lazarett* or hospital. At the far end of the camp was the prison, and the dark cells, while to the left of it was another large enclosure with a few more barracks for the guards. In one corner of the main camp was a new building called the "Cinema," which was very seldom used. Such was the appearance of the camp that was to be our home for some time—no one knew how long.

"How many pairs of boots have you?" demanded the storekeeper before whom we were lined up for inspection.

"Only those we are wearing," we replied in unison.

"You must have two," he abruptly ordered, calling to an orderly whom he directed to supply us with a pair of wooden sabots each. The same was true of socks, though they did not supply the regular knitted variety to prisoners, but gave us each two squares of cloth, with the information that these

were "Russian socks!" We found them very useful as polishing cloths.

"Issue these prisoners what they require in the camp," commanded the storekeeper. The first "requirement" was a sack, far from clean, filled with leaves and shavings, which by a violent stretch of imagination was called a mattress. Another sack of blue and white checked material, filled with newspapers laid flat, served as a blanket. The next in order was a half-blanket, which had evidently seen long service, as it was very thin, threadbare—and dirty. This completed our bedding. The towel would have been an interesting specimen in a collection of "fine linen," its texture being a miscellaneous weave of cotton, straw and wood fiber. The bowl had two purposes to serve—that of a wash basin and container for soup. A spoon was issued, but no knife or fork—which was really immaterial, as we never had that kind of soup. Our requirements all now being filled, we were sent to our barracks.

"Hello, boys!" greeted us as we entered. "Welcome to Celle!"

We were soon surrounded by a smiling and excited crowd of English and Canadians, who plied us with many questions as to where we were captured, conditions in England and at the battle front.

"Where are the beds?" I asked, as I wished to put my things away.

"Beds?" said one of them. "There are no beds here. We sleep on the floor."

Barracks No. 45 is the replica of hundreds of others in Germany. It is forty feet wide by one hundred feet long; built a few feet off the ground on a brick foundation; unpainted and very much weather-beaten. The construction is not the best in the world, there being many cracks through which the sand and dirt drifted in. The building is divided by wood partitions into four rooms. Two small ones at each end, about ten feet square, were used by the senior members of the barrack. The other two rooms were each forty by forty feet. We did not sleep on beds, as do the prisoners in the Allied camps, but in partitioned-off spaces on the floor; and in order that no room may be wasted platforms or upper berths are built about five feet above the



lower, where the prisoners are herded in the same manner as below. There were no tables or chairs, other than those the boys had fashioned for themselves. Along each wall are shelves, with a space apportioned to each prisoner for his effects. The barracks are lighted by electricity, but water must be drawn from taps in the main thoroughfare. Heat was supplied by a stove in each room; but no fires were allowed in the spring, summer or autumn and very little in the winter. Each barrack is supplied with a small twig broom, but owing to the many cracks through which the sand and dirt can sift it is almost impossible to keep the floor clean.

Each nationality is quartered separately, but occasionally English and French are put together in the same barracks. In 1914 and 1915 all nationalities were herded together, but this has been discontinued, as it was better for the harmony of the camp. The English and another nationality were once put together and could not agree on the amount of fresh air to be admitted during the night; the English wanted the windows wide open while the others were just as insistent that the windows re-

main closed, which, with sixty men in a room, was far from sanitary. After several nights of alternate opening and closing of the windows, the English finally won out—with the result that the two nationalities were separated.

I picked out one of the partitioned-off spaces on the floor and made my bed, but as yet I did not require shelf space for I had nothing to occupy it.

It was Saturday afternoon and there was no work, prisoners being allowed a half holiday. This gave the new arrivals an opportunity to get well acquainted. I got into conversation with an Englishman by the name of Hawes. He was a member of the Fourth Middlesex Battalion, part of the original British Expeditionary Force. He was captured at the battle of Mons and had been a prisoner for two years. Only five feet four inches in height he was, but every inch a British soldier—always smiling and cheerful, never down-hearted. At one time he had a reputation as a pugilist and was therefore known as "Boxer." He was very chummy and optimistic and we soon became fast friends.

"In what engagement were you captured?" he asked me.

"Sanctuary Wood, June the second."

"Was that at Ypres?" he questioned.

"Yes," I replied.

"Then come with me, as I know something that will interest you."

We went into the next room.

"Dunc," he spoke to one of the fellows; "here's a Canadian captured at Ypres. Have you still that newspaper?"

Duncan dived under his mattress and from within a hidden recess produced what is probably the most valued possession of a prisoner in Germany—an English newspaper. "Be very careful and do not lose it," he warned us; "and do not let any German see you reading it, unless you wish to spend a term in the dark cells."

English prisoners are forbidden to receive papers from home and as a result are forced to resort to "underground" methods to obtain them. These methods are rather intricate and in consequence very

few get through; but when one does it brings great joy and excitement, necessarily subdued. The news spreads fast and soon the barrack is crowded with fellows eager and anxious to know what is going on in the outside world. Real news is very scarce. We have to rely entirely upon German publications. The only paper we were allowed was a rotten "yellow," pro-German sheet (supposedly neutral, but more rabidly German than the German papers themselves) known as *The Continental Times*. It contains the vilest and filthiest of articles and conducts a general tirade against England. It is published in Berlin by R. L. Orchelle, an American, and Audrey Stanhope, a renegade Englishman. It claims to publish "the truth about the war" for neutrals in Germany, but the accuracy of this "truth" is doubtful, being of the Ananias brand. In some places this paper is on sale; in others it is distributed free of charge; but in the former it can not be said that there is a rushing business, and in the latter it is so unpopular as to be received with ill-concealed contempt. Shortly before I left the

publishers were about to try the experiment of publishing it in Russian for the prisoners of that country.

The French and Belgians are allowed to purchase and receive the papers from their own countries. In Hamelin Camp there was a news-stand where many of the leading papers were on sale, but none in English, except the one just mentioned.

We handled that English newspaper, *The York-shirt Post*, as if it were made of gold. It was very much thumbbed, worn and torn, badly marked, creased, covered with big grease spots, and had been read so often that the print was almost obliterated; but to us it was a priceless treasure. It was the first paper we had seen since our capture, giving an accurate account of the battle of Jutland and also the action at Sanctuary Wood, and what the nation thought of our stand on that occasion. The six of us from Hanover gathered about my bed and read every word—even to the advertisements—and then we started all over again. Frequently we were interrupted by the cry of “*Zwantzy-two!*” meaning

that a German was approaching, whereupon the precious sheet would be hastily hidden, only to be brought out again when the coast was clear.

## CHAPTER XII

### SEEING THE SIGHTS

"How are you boys fixed for food?" We looked up from the pleasant occupation of devouring our newspaper, to find the sergeant-major in charge of the barrack approaching.

"Food, did you say? We haven't had any real food for so long that we hardly know what you mean."

"Well, if you fellows haven't any parcels, come along with me and I'll fix you with something to last for a little while anyway."

Our arrival had been reported to him, and realizing that we would be without food he had gone among the other fellows and taken up a collection. This he had divided so that we each received an equal share. The boys were wonderfully generous. I have yet to meet a more unselfish lot of men than the British prisoners in Germany. They share up

everything—even to their last crust. When one is without, all are without.

The sergeant-major next inquired as to our clothing—socks and shirts—and finding we had only those we had on, he supplied us from the Canadian Red Cross stock.

The prisoners live together in what is known as “mucking-in-gangs.” This is an old British army term for messing together. Three or four fellows get together and pool all their parcels into one common fund, in this way making the food go very much further. Blaxland, Wardle, Martin and I mucked in together. Each gang has a Russian batman or servant, who looks after them. These Russians do all the work and in return we give them food.

A little Russian attached himself to our gang and did everything—drew the water for tea, washed our dishes, mended our clothes and washed them; and in my case, as I could do very little for myself, made my bed, and looked after me generally. He followed us wherever we were sent. We would be established but a short time in a new camp when Ivan



would appear on the scene and superintend everything. He was a comical little chap, to whom I was greatly attracted because he bore my name. He was extremely clever; so clever, indeed, that for two years he had convinced the Germans that he was insane, though a saner chap never lived. His antics at times were very amusing when he was playing crazy. He was anxious to learn English and one of his tricks was to mutter for hours one or two new words he had just learned.

“All prisoners who arrived to-day form in line for bath parade.”

The Germans demand that all prisoners bathe regularly, certain days being set aside for different nationalities. We entered the bath-house, giving our clothes to an orderly, who put them into the fumigator, and passed on to the clipping room, where all superfluous hair was clipped from the head and body, to minimize the vermin. In 1914 and 1915 the camps were alive with vermin, but this has now been overcome to a certain extent, though all of them were terribly infested with fleas, from which there was no relief, and no efforts were made to

exterminate them. They are very vicious and cause the prisoners untold pain and are often the cause of infection.

The bath completed and our clothes recovered from the fumigator, we were sent back to our barracks.

Supper was over and I was sitting on the steps reading a book.

"Have you been around the camp yet?" asked Boxer Hawes. "Come along," he said, when I replied in the negative, "and I'll show you the sights."

I was naturally anxious to see the place which would probably be my home for heaven knew how long.

Our first stop was at the canteen. This was just one of the barracks fitted up for the purpose, unpainted as the rest, and entirely bare of furniture. A counter ran along one side and end, where some of the more "valuable" wares, such as pocket knives, padlocks, nails, note-books and pencils were displayed in glass cases.

Back of this counter were shelves where the rest of the stock was kept, while one end of the counter

was covered with oilcloth and resembled a bar with its bottles, kegs and tall glasses. The illusion was soon dispelled as the bottles contained only soda water—"pop!"—and the kegs a light substitute beer—not as strong as two per cent., very bitter and usually "out of stock." The canteen was run by the Germans and was a most cheerless, desolate and dirty place.

"What are those orders tacked on the walls?"

"They are inquiry papers," said Boxer, "sent to the different camps by the *Societie Internationale Prisoners la Guerre*, Berne, Switzerland, seeking information of men who are missing. If the relatives of a missing soldier notify this society it will immediately send one of these placards to every camp in Germany. We always read them carefully, as frequently we come across some one we know and are able to send back some information. Although we are only allowed two letters and four post-cards a month, yet we are glad to sacrifice the pleasure of writing to a relative or friend if we can give comfort to some anxious heart that is waiting at home for news."

From the canteen, we went to a *küche* or kitchen. Like the other buildings, it was badly in need of a coat of paint. It was paved with brick and kept fairly clean. In the center were four large coppers in brick jackets for boiling the water and preparing the stews. There were a few cases and barrels near by which Boxer informed me contained preserved meat for the soup. I was willing to take his word for it as the aroma was enough to make us hurry on to the next building.

This, the Recreation Barracks, had formerly been a regular barrack, but was now turned over for the use of the English and Belgians, the latter having one-half and we the other. All the furniture—tables and chairs—had been built by the industrious ones from packing boxes that had at one time contained food, sent out through the American Express. In one corner was a small Red Cross library and various games also from the same society, which helped to pass many a weary hour in Celle. The library contained a number of educational books, and at night when work was finished not a few English and French gathered here to study the two lan-

guages. It will be surprising after the war the number of prison soldiers who will be able to converse at least in French, and who will know something of German or Russian or both. A new "language" has been born of this war, in the German prison camps, and is a medium of conversation between the different nationalities, being made up of German, Russian, French and English, resembling somewhat pidgin-English. It serves the purpose admirably, although it would be impossible for any one but a prisoner in a German camp to understand it.

We could not inspect the Cinema as it was closed to the English, who were undergoing punishment for refusing to salute the German *unter officier*.

Then having seen the principal sights, we decided to make a complete circuit of the camp. What a queer sight it was! Men of all sorts and descriptions—big men and little; some young and some quite old; some in uniform and some in civilian clothes; some well dressed, others hardly dressed at all; of all countries and nationalities. It was a great international kaleidoscope. There were huge Russians

in olive-drab shirts worn without a belt outside the dark blue trousers. Their boots were of knee length and of beautiful workmanship.

There were other Russians not so fortunate, the Germans having taken their uniforms from them and issued them a sort of civilian outfit, shapeless and ill-fitting, black in color, with a brown stripe running down the trousers and a patch of the same color on one sleeve of the tunic. There were dapper little Frenchmen in many kinds of uniforms, all looking very neat and clean—some in horizon blue, others in the old uniform of blood-red trousers and dark blue tunics. Members of the cavalry with light blue breeches and yellow facings, French Algerians with the wide flaring white trousers and tight fitting tunics of light blue, worked with fancy designs in yellow; French Turcos in khaki tunics, wide trousers and red fezes. The Belgians in natty uniforms of dark blue with red and yellow facings, and last but not least, the English—some of whom were fortunate enough to have khaki, but many in issued clothing, with the brown stripes and patches. The majority, however, were dressed in the uniform

supplied by the Red Cross, which is black, cut in the same style as the Imperial uniform, with yellow stripes on the trousers, the same color decorating the cuffs and collars of the tunics, and the edge of the hats. A number of the English also had great lines of red paint on the seams of their clothes which I afterward learned was a mark to distinguish those who had made an attempt to escape and to indicate to guards that they must keep an extra watch on all who wore this color.

Many of the prisoners were labeled by a painted sign on the back of their coats: "*Krgsgfg-Celle*," meaning *Kriegsgefangenenlager* at Celle Camp; others have huge triangles cut from the back of their coats and replaced with yellow. Germany deliberately does this so as to make them appear ridiculous in the eyes of her own people.

Some were talking or playing games, others were sitting on the steps of their respective barracks smoking, while outside the wire the German sentries in their field gray uniforms and clumsy boots were marching up and down.

Germany in this war has made the mistake of

consistently considering her prisoners as so many animals, not only in the matter of housing but also as to feeding. She herds them together and expects them to work on food such as is fit only for pigs. They have persistently and continually called us *schwein-hund*, so that it does not take a great stretch of the imagination to explain why we are treated as such.

The food served in Celle was no better and no worse than that issued in other *lagers*, which, to put it mildly, was uneatable.

At seven o'clock a large pail of burnt acorn broth supposed to be coffee was served. We did not drink it. At twelve, dinner consisted of a bowl of soup; at least that is what the Germans called it; we had a different name for it. There were many varieties, none of which was really edible, and although it frequently varied, the offensive odor was always the same. Soup was usually a combination of bad vegetables and tainted meat; the water, which was the chief ingredient, was drawn from peat bogs, and was very dark. Sometimes we had a delicious con-



coction—potato peelings and this dirty water. Another favorite was putrid cabbage, carrots, turnips, onions or mangel-wurzel. Friday was meatless day—the others were too, but not officially. On this day we had fish-head soup, deliciously flavored with the eyes—a great German delicacy. At other times we had “preserved meat,” with the emphasis most decidedly on the “preserved.” Another delicacy was dried bean shells, while a further relief from possible monotony came in the form of grass soup with a few carrots for coloring.

At four o'clock the bread was issued—five and one-half ounces of black prison bread, made of rye and wheat flour, in small quantities, potatoes (but not potato flour); and lastly and largely, sawdust, — of which Germany has a large supply. So long as the kaiser's kingdom has her state forests her prisoners need have no fear of going breadless. During the summer months we had to eat this bitter bread exclusively as the white bread sent from England arrived moldy and uneatable, having been on the way three weeks or more. It is now sent from

Switzerland, and arrives in good condition as Berne is only nine days away.

For supper we had another brand of soup, but called a cereal. It was made of some wild, hard and musty grain, the name of which I have since forgotten. It also contained dried fruits, but I think the drying process began about the same time the Prussians began to prepare for this war—forty years ago.

For sustaining food we have to rely entirely upon the parcels that are sent to us by the Red Cross. Without them we British would be in the same condition as the Russians, who are dying from starvation in Germany. The amount of food supplied by the Germans is hardly sufficient to keep a bedridden invalid alive; there is little or no nutrition in it and only when we are forced to, by the non-arrival of our parcels, do we eat it. Whenever we have parcels we always draw the rations and give them to the Russians.

These Red Cross parcels do get through, although at times they are greatly delayed. They

are packed in London and shipped to Holland, where they are sorted, placed in the different trucks and forwarded to their various destinations in Germany. They are handled by the military authorities, not by the civilian post-office, and there is at present no danger of the population seizing them, though at times we have cases of petty pilfering.

Upon arrival at the camps the parcels are sorted by a post-office staff that is chosen from the various nationalities. A list is made out and posted in the different barracks, and at certain hours of the day we are allowed to draw our parcels. First we must sign for them and also send an acknowledgment; then we pass along to the censor, who examines everything thoroughly to see that there is no contraband. We who have been through the German prison camps and have come out safely owe our lives to these Red Cross parcels; without them we would undoubtedly have perished.

Not only does the Red Cross supply food, but also clothing—a complete change twice a year—and at different times overcoats, blankets, socks,

shirts and toilet requisites. It is a huge task the Red Cross is performing, performing marvelously and to the salvation of all British prisoners in Germany.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CAMPS OF MADNESS

"HEY there, show a leg; show a leg; time for *Appell!*"

"Hurry up, lad," said Boxer; "if the *feldwebel* finds you here when he makes his rounds, I can see where you'll be spending a few days in *clique*." With that, Boxer busied himself in making my bed, while I hastily scrambled into my clothes and pulled on my boots.

The day was Sunday and we were allowed an extra hour of sleep, parade being held an hour later than usual.

"What group shall I fall in with?" I asked Boxer.

"Have you been before the doctor yet? If not, you had better fall in with those who are *krank*." I replied that I was not cranky as yet, but there was a possibility of my being that before long.

"I know you're not," said Boxer, "but that means sick."

I followed his advice. Most of *die Engländer* were in this column; some with crutches, who needed them to get around, some who had crutches and didn't need them but were successfully "swinging the lead," (bluffing); while others who had nothing the matter with them were in this column, trying to dodge work. In this latter art the English were very successful; as it is against their principles to do any work that isn't necessary or compulsory. Sunday is a holiday, no work being required of the prisoners, but this made no difference to the dodgers, as force of habit is strong.

"The prisoners who arrived yesterday from Hanover will report at nine o'clock this morning to the doctor, for inspection," the *dollmetscher* (interpreter) translated the *feldwebel's* order to us.

Each nationality is allowed a *dollmetscher*, who is excused from all other work, and serves without pay. These are men from the prisoners and selected because of their knowledge of the German language.

Recently, I had occasion to spend some time in a Canadian internment camp, in which one hundred and twenty German prisoners were interned. Every consideration was being shown them, both as to housing and feeding, and they gave every evidence of being comfortable and contented. They all received ample pay for whatever work they did, even the *dollmetscher*, who was paid seventy dollars a month for his services and allowed extra liberty.

In Celle we had a Scotchman who had an inherent dislike for work of any kind, and had become quite an expert at dodging, but almost came to grief one day when he was picked for a working party. The fellows teased him unmercifully at being caught, but this only made him more determined than ever not to work for the Germans. The next morning he appeared on parade with a large piece of Scotch plaid sewed on the upper part of his sleeve.

"I wonder what Scotty's up to now," but after repeated questionings we were still in ignorance. It was not long before the decoration caught the eagle eye of the *feldwebel* who inquired its significance, with a stern "*Was ist?*"

"Div ye no ken, mon?" naively replied Scotty.

"*Wozu?*" angrily demanded the *feldwebel*, pointing to the plaid.

"Hae ye no seen yon afore?" persisted Scotty.

The *feldwebel's* fury knew no bounds, and fearing he was being ridiculed, he called the English *dollmetscher* who asked Scotty for an explanation.

"All ither nationalities hae a *dollmetscher* except the Schottlander. We must hae one, sair, and as ye hae no one that kens oor talk, I thocht I cud do it as weel as ony ither." The column broke into a roar of laughter, the *feldwebel* joining in as soon as it had been explained to him. He appreciated the joke, appointed Scotty to the important position of Scotch *dollmetscher*, thereby relieving him of all work.

In the early days of the war prisoners were sent out to work regardless of their physical fitness. Through the efforts of Mr. Gerard, former American Ambassador to Germany, prisoners are now given a medical examination to determine their condition, and grouped accordingly. Groups No. 1 and



No. 2 are fit for outside work, and so far as the English are concerned are sent out almost immediately. Group No. 3 is for camp duty only, while No. 4 and No. 5 represent Swiss and English exchange, respectively, or new prisoners awaiting inoculation. These examinations are a farce, as the "doctors" are merely medical students, who have little knowledge as to a man's fitness for work. We were given a superficial examination and assigned to Group No. 4 to await inoculation.

The German medical authorities are firm believers in the use of serums for the prevention of disease. I was immediately inoculated with three different serums, and a week later with two more, and was vaccinated six times.

After the inoculation, as there was nothing further required of us, we were dismissed for the day.

Sunday was like every other day, even as to the food. It was quiet and we lounged around the barracks, writing the weekly post-card, reading, swapping stories and walking. There was no religious

service nor any other observance of the day except as the prisoner's personal inclinations might lead him.

Life soon became very monotonous and so depressing that it was only by the greatest effort of the will that we were able to keep from going mad. Indeed these camps could rightly be called "Camps of Madness." In an enemy country, with poor food and little of it, ill treatment, hatred and frequently brutality, with depressing news of German victories, with infrequent word from home, is it any wonder that many prisoners become hopelessly insane? Thousands of Russians, as well as many men of other nationalities, have lost their reason and are in a pitiful condition. This insanity is confined largely to the illiterate, which accounts for the heavy percentage among the Russians. The percentage is lightest among the English, due to their determination not to be down-hearted, and their intelligent and optimistic outlook on life, consoling themselves with the thought that these hardships will soon come to an end and before long they will be back in Blighty.

The more intelligent of the prisoners grasp every

opportunity to improve themselves, many of them, as I have already mentioned, studying different languages; while others are preparing for the future by learning new trades from text-books supplied through the Red Cross by the Board of Education in England. Many have become expert knitters, making socks and sweaters for themselves and their friends. Even in a prison camp one can not get away from the click of the knitting needles, the most popular design in sweaters being the "twisted rope."

One day I discovered Boxer working energetically on an intricate pattern in pink and white wool. "Why the fancy work in pink and white, Boxer?" I asked.

Holding up a miniature pink and white sweater, which he fondled with ill-concealed emotion, he replied: "That's for the kiddie back home." Going to his box, he brought out a tiny pair of pink and white wool booties, with pink tassels; a pair of mittens in the same colors, and a small bonnet to match—all for the baby; a blue sweater and a pair of gloves for the wife. "Her and the young un won't

be 'arf pleased with 'em," he said as he carefully replaced them.

"But where did you get that pink and white?" I asked curiously.

"The missus sends it 'out," he answered; "but the 'eavier grades are sent out by the Red Cross."

"Are any of the other fellows knitting?" I asked him.

"Most of the married ones," he assured me, "are supplyin' their families with sweaters, socks and scarfs. Paddy is makin' a blanket."

He brought down Paddy's box from the shelf and displayed the result of many months' hard work—a wool afghan which would have done credit to nimbler fingers. This was made up of eight-inch knitted squares joined together. Each square had a center of white in a field of blue, which was surrounded by a border of white just inside an edging of khaki. After all the squares were joined together, the whole was outlined with a deep border of khaki-colored wool. It required almost a year to complete the task. Paddy's great concern in mak-

ing this afghan was how he was going to get it safely to his family in England.

The barrack rooms at times made me think of a woman's sewing circle on a Friday afternoon, except for the absence of chatter, and the lack of neighbors to gossip about. The prisoners' talents were not all confined to knitting. Had the various articles been collected and placed on exhibition, the folks back home would have been surprised at the variety and the excellence of the work.

Many of the English boys have become expert needleworkers and embroiderers, no design being too intricate or difficult for them. Their favorite was the regimental crest in colors, worked in silk on khaki-colored linen handkerchiefs, the materials having been supplied by the Red Cross. The women will surely have to "look to their laurels" when these fellows come back.

Another pastime of the English is fillet work, some exquisite designs having been evolved. It was noticeable though that the majority who did this work were unmarried.

Give a Russian a knife, a piece of bone or wood, and he will be happy for a good long time, and incidentally finish something that will be useful. In the early days of the war, bones were occasionally found in the soup. These were carefully collected, scraped, cleaned and dried. With only a knife for a tool, they would do some wonderful carving; transforming these erstwhile soup-bones into beautiful napkin rings, paper knives, etc., with many artistic designs of flowers and flags carved in them. In wood there was nothing they could not accomplish, no design too difficult for them to undertake, be it a picture frame, statuette, box, paper knife or valise. The latter was the most popular and the Russians had a ready sale for them. They were made mostly of packing boxes obtained from the English, whose parcels had been transported in them. They were of standard shape, covered and lined with cloth, bound with iron, and had leather handles. Eventually every prisoner buys one, as they are really very handy and well constructed.

A Russian's pack is a curious sight indeed. Such things as nails, leather, cloth, etc., that are so neces-

sary in their work, can not of course be bought, so he has to keep his eyes ever on the alert to replenish his stock of these essentials.

However, their work in bone and wood is crude compared with the articles they produce with horse hair. They make the most beautiful rings, necklaces, watch-chains and fobs. There is a great demand for this work. I do not know what they do with the money as there is little or nothing to buy at the canteens. At first there was food, but those days have long since passed.

One of our few amusements was football, but it was first necessary to obtain the consent of the commandant before playing. We had three teams in Celle: English, French, and a mixed Belgian and Russian. No team could have a regular line-up because the prisoners were ever being transferred from one camp to another.

The French have a game that is played with a small rubber ball that resembles tennis except there is no net. It is rather exciting and usually attracts a good crowd of spectators.

After many weeks, word was passed around the

camp one Sunday that there was to be a concert that night at the Cinema—something at last to break the monotony! Reserved seats were on sale at two o'clock; price twenty-five pfennig (five cents); "Rush" seats when the doors opened, at ten pfennig (two cents). Being curious and anxious for a seat, I indulged in the price of a reserve, and was on hand promptly at eight o'clock, so that I could get a good view of the crowd.

The Cinema building was about twenty-five by fifty feet, capable of seating probably three hundred. A small platform at one end, with a drop curtain and some scenery, comprised the stage; at one side was the orchestra—a piano. The place was soon filled with an excited crowd, all talking at once, but not loud enough to drown the sonorous tones of the French program vender. The price of each program was ten pfennig. I still have that program and it makes a most interesting souvenir of Celle. On the back is a picture of the theater and portraits of two of the actors. The program was in two parts—twenty numbers in all. There was instrumental music, singing, dancing, juggling,



strong men, recitations, and a one-act play. Everything was in French, as the *poilus* were responsible for the production. The hit of the evening was a female impersonator who, I assure you, was "some lady." Another success was a Russian who gave his national dances in costume, and as an encore sang *Fairyland* with so much feeling that practically the whole audience was in tears.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MISSING

“AUFWECKEN! *Aufwecken! Aufstehen! Kaffee hohlen! Los! Los!*” The sentry had a powerful voice, making sleep impossible.

Time—Six o'clock any morning.

Place—Any prison camp in Germany.

Scene—*Die Engländer's barracks.* Sixty sleeping forms in their stalls on the floor and platforms. All is quiet but for the continued snoring. The door is thrown violently open. A German sentry bursts in, with the above command, and immediately all is excitement. There is half an hour in which to get dressed, make beds, and fall in on “*appell.*”

The two orderlies who are appointed weekly, fetch the *kaffee* from the *küche*. This is so bitter it is never drunk, but the orderlies use it to keep down the dust when sweeping. This *kaffee* is all that is issued for breakfast, but as we have confidence in

our ability to dodge the working party, we take a chance on preparing our own breakfast after *appell*.

The bugle sounds and there is a rush from every barracks—prisoners in all stages of dress and undress—mostly the latter, boots unlaced, coats undone, and all unwashed, with sleep still in their eyes, but all anxious to be on time. Parade is held in the open space between the barracks and the barbed wire, each nationality in its separate column; the English always being the last to fall in, and most of them in the *krank* column. Those who are fully dressed are in the front ranks, while the others in different stages of *deshabille* are in the rear, grasping the opportunity when the *feldwebel's* back is turned to finish their toilets. The sergeant-major calls the roll to see if all are present, that none has gone on a "vacation" during the night. He reports to the *dollmetscher* that out of seventy-six Englishmen present, seventy-three are *krank*.

The morning is cold and chilly and the *feldwebel* is in no hurry to dismiss *die Engländer*, who are at the far end. He commences to pick his working party

from the head of the line; then deciding he must have some of *die Englanders* to fill in, he comes to our end. Between the French and the English *krank* columns there is a wide gap, with three isolated *Englanders* eligible for work. The *feldwebel* is dumfounded for a moment. Turning to the *dollmetscher*, he commands: "Bring *die Engländer hier!*" The *dollmetscher* salutes and reports that all *Englanders* are present. The *feldwebel* immediately flies into a terrible rage. "*Die faulen Engländer—immer krank!*" Then he starts a thorough investigation of the *krank* column. This takes a long time, each prisoner having to be separately interviewed, which does not improve the *feldwebel's* temper. Many he decides are fit for work, and the bluff being called, they move off, crestfallen but smiling, to fill up the gap between the columns. Having weeded out the Englishmen to his satisfaction, he moves to the far end of the line to continue his task. He has no system. Instead of posting a list, keeping books, notifying prisoners that they are next for work, which would save him considerable time, he rushes from one column to another, picking pris-

oners indiscriminately and wasting what to him is valuable time. The working parties are eventually made up and turned over to their respective sentries and start for their work. Then the *feldwebel* inspects the remaining French prisoners and dismisses them. The Belgians and Russians follow suit, leaving only *die Englanders*. It is now about eighty-three, and having had them there for about two hours, he now dismisses them.

Ivan, our orderly, having been dismissed a half-hour before the rest of us, has a supply of hot water on hand for our tea. Our gang fortunately has escaped the working party this morning and we are all present for breakfast.

"Go easy on the grub," says Blaxland; "you know we haven't had any parcels for several days, and supplies are getting low." He is the chief custodian of the parcel fund for our gang.

I removed the lid from our teapot, which had formerly done duty as a twelve-pound bully beef tin, but which, with the addition of a wire handle that acted as a guide for a sliding lid, served its present purpose admirably. I threw in the leaves, add-

ed the hot water, replaced the cover, and in a few minutes our tea was made.

No bread had come through from Switzerland, so we were forced to use the prison bread. From our fund we brought forth a tin of salmon, one of jam, and dripping. Breakfast was ready. Our appetites were sharpened by the cool morning air and no time was lost over the simple and scanty meal.

"Where's your polishing outfit?" I asked Boxer. "I want to clean my buttons and boots."

"You'll find it in my box. Help yourself," he replied, without looking up from his knitting.

That "cleanliness is next to godliness" is drilled into the British soldier from the very first day of his enlistment, and he always tries to live up to it no matter where he may be. It is the British soldier's constant attention to his personal appearance that has helped him to maintain his self-respect and to keep up his spirits in spite of discouraging conditions and harsh treatment. A man who is slovenly in his personal appearance or habits, who pays no attention to shaving and the other minor details of his toilet, soon loses all interest in life,

and is easily cowed. So far, the Germans have not succeeded in subduing the British spirit.

"Coming for a walk this morning, Boxer?" I inquired of my friend.

"Sure," he replied. "Slip us the cleaning outfit."

With buttons polished, clothes brushed, boots cleaned, faces washed and feeling ever so much better as the result, we started out for our daily morning walk around the camp.

We stopped near the gate to listen to the German band practising in its barracks near by.

"What's that bunch doing over there?" I asked, pointing toward an incongruous assortment of human beings drilling outside the wire.

"That is the German army in training," I was enlightened.

"Then thank God we're not subjects of the kaiser," I replied as we stood watching them.

It was a detachment of the *Landsturm*—the last reserves to be called; men forty-five to fifty; some tall, some short, some lean, some fat; some dressed in the blue uniform, the rest in field gray, but all had the small round fatigue cap of red and blue.

They were equipped with many varieties of rifles; Mannlickers and Mausers; old and new, long and short; with thin bayonets and broad bayonets, a number having the most terrible of all bayonets—that with the double saw-edge back.

Their training is not nearly so severe as that to which the regulars are subjected; but even at that it would be enough to cause open rebellion in our army. We have often thought our army life almost unbearable, but we have never had to take insults and physical abuse such as are meted out to the *Landsturm*. I have never seen such brutal treatment, all under the guise of discipline. This is only possible for the reason that the German soldier stands in such absolute awe of his officer that he takes it as a matter of course.

I realized anew, as I watched these men, what we are fighting for; that if Germany should be victorious we too would be compelled to serve under this damnable and inhuman system; that personal freedom and liberty would disappear, and we should have to “goose-step” to the tune of the Prussian military system.



These troops are forced to drill in heavy marching order, with full packs, and little or no consideration is shown them by their officers or their *unter officier*. The officer usually stands in some shady nook during the heat of the day, barking out his orders, which his *unter officiers* carry out to the letter. The *feldwebel*, picked for his reputation for brutality, with a great weight of gold braid on his arm, carries a large club which he uses on the men to good purpose.

On this particular occasion the drill was done at the "double" under a scorching sun, with an officer in command who was anything but a gentleman. If the men did not move fast enough to suit this raging brute, the *feldwebel* was on hand with his unsparing and indiscriminate club.

Little or no rest is allowed on parade. I have seen officers leave their men in the hot sun standing at attention, with rifles at the shoulder, rigidly erect, eyes front, while they went to the canteen for rest and liquid refreshment. If the men dared so much as to incline their heads either to the right or left, the *feldwebel* would use his ever-ready club.

Their system of discipline is based on fear, physical force, and the complete subjugation of the soldier to his officer, stifling initiative, and making of him a mere machine. The officer holds such power and domination over his men that he can commit almost any indignity against them without fear of retaliation. Can you imagine any red-blooded, self-respecting, intelligent man remaining at "attention" after being slashed in the face with the officer's gloves, and without any provocation? It is not surprising that these men, trained under such a brutalizing system, have committed atrocities.

We finished our walk at eleven-thirty so that we could prepare dinner.

"Who's got five pfennigs?" asked Blaxland.

"Here you are," I replied, drawing forth the required amount from my scanty supply.

"Take this tin of pork and beans to the *küche* and get it heated," he told Wardle, handing him the five pfennigs and the tin. Wardle hastened to the *küche*, paid his five pfennigs to the chef in charge (a grafter of the first class), and was allowed to drop the tin fastened to a piece of string, into the

boiling water for a period of twenty minutes. This water serves a double purpose, as it eventually becomes our soup for supper. Wardle returned with the beans, and with water for our tea, and dinner was soon ready. The soup that had been issued was of the usual undrinkable variety, so we turned it over to the Russians, who had a free-for-all fight in their anxiety to get a little extra, just like so many hungry dogs quarreling over a bone.

We were eating our dinner when the mail man arrived. I had almost given up hope of ever receiving any letters, and tried not to listen to the names as they were called, steeling myself against possible disappointment, yet secretly hoping.

“Private I. S. Rossiter!”

I could hardly believe my ears. Surely there must be some mistake, and I hesitated to take the letter for fear of having to give it up again.

“Boxer, is that letter really for me?” I handed it to him in my excitement.

“Well, it’s addressed to Rossiter, and you’re Rossiter, aren’t you? Good luck, old top!” handing it back.

Still dazed, I turned it over and over, and then, laying it on the table, I gazed at it for a long time, not daring to open it.

"Why don't you open it, Rosie?" said Blaxland; "does it look like bad news?"

"Dinner is getting cold," reminded Wardle, "better come and finish and let the letter wait, if you're afraid."

"Dinner?" I cried; "dinner be hanged."

However I returned to the table with the envelope unopened. I recognized the writing; it was from Canada but not from home. Originally addressed to France, it had been returned to the Dead Letter Office marked in red ink with the most terrible of all words—"MISSING," signed "W. R. Roblin, Captain First C. M. R. Battalion." When the Red Cross received my card from Hanover, they immediately notified the Dead Letter Office, which in turn sent the letter to me addressed "Hanover," and from there it followed me to Celle. Somehow I got through my dinner, and then gingerly opened the envelope. The letter was written on June twenty-fifth and had been over three months on its way.

Up to that time I had not even been reported missing, and the writer told me all about the battle, the fearful casualty lists, and the awful anxiety of the Canadian people. The letter was supposed to have been censored, but the job could not have been done very thoroughly as it contained much news that was of great interest to us all. The writer had enclosed a four-leaf clover, with the expressed hope that it would bring me "good luck." Who can blame me for having become a firm believer in the four-leaf clover superstition? It was evidently determined that I should become a convert for it followed me through four different countries and finally sought me out in a prison camp—the most inaccessible of all places. It succeeded in its mission, for not only did I receive the letter; but a few days later I was examined by the traveling Swiss Board who recommended that I be sent to Switzerland for internment. On the strength of this recommendation, I succeeded in dodging all working parties from that time on.

"Has the parcel list been posted?" questioned Boxer.

"Posted half an hour ago," was the reply.

"It never rains but it pours. Two for Wardle and one for myself," I remarked as I returned a few minutes later with some parcels, containing food.

"Are you willing to take a chance?" I asked Blaxland, when the prison bread was issued for supper.

"I am ready for anything. What is it?"

"Let's build a fire in the stove and use some of those soup cubes." To which Blaxland agreed.

Great care had to be taken as fires were forbidden and dire punishment fell on all offenders.

Wardle acted as guard. We broke the boxes that had arrived that afternoon into very small pieces to prevent smoke. Then we filled our bowl (wash basin) with warm water, added some biscuits and soup cubes and stirred over the fire until it boiled to our satisfaction. When ready the bowl was set in the center of the table and we went at it, individual service being dispensed with.

Our meal was frequently interrupted by Russians inquiring: "*Brod? Mich. Geld,*" holding forth the

prison equivalent of money, eager if possible to buy bread. From four-thirty to five-thirty they made themselves a nuisance as they followed close upon each other's heels in procession through our barracks, pleading for bread with hungry eyes.

Night *appell*, at five-thirty, lasted but a short time, after which we again took up our walk until time to retire—nine-thirty. And thus endeth an average day in a German prison camp.

## CHAPTER XV

### FIVE GRADES OF PUNISHMENT

GERMANY has divided her camps into four classes: the first for officers; the second for non-commissioned officers; the third for privates; while the fourth is the working camp.

The first, or officers', is known as *Schloss*. Of this I know nothing further than what I have been told. Boxer served some time as an officer's servant, and according to his story, they receive much better treatment than the rank and file. The German government pays them twenty marks a week, from which is deducted the price of their food. The places of internment are more comfortable, have some conveniences; the food is of a better grade and the officers are allowed more privileges than the common soldier. Each officer is permitted a servant, usually a French or Belgian prisoner. They are not expected to work, and have more opportuni-



ties for recreation. In general the life of an officer, while it leaves much to be desired even as a prisoner, is at least not unbearable; but as might be expected, Germany does not accord them the courtesy due their ranks, but treats them with characteristic contempt—humiliating to say the least.

The non-commissioned officers are confined in what are correctly named Exercise Camps. According to The Hague Convention they too are absolved from all work. This is one of the few regulations that Germany recognizes. She does not force them to work; her method is far more subtle. These camps are usually situated on some barren dreary spot, far from human habitation. The housing and feeding are the same as in the main camps for the private soldier; but the life is somewhat different. The day's routine is made up of almost ceaseless drilling and exercise. Commencing at seven o'clock in the morning, under a brutal *feldwebel* with a large force of assistants, they march until half past eleven: forward twenty-five yards, about turn, back twenty-five yards; repeating this for nine minutes straight; then a rest of one

minute is allowed, and again the marching is resumed for another nine minutes, followed by another minute's rest—and so on for four hours. An intermission of two hours is allowed for dinner, after which the morning's performance is repeated until half past five. This finishes the day's exercise. At first prisoners frequently drop from sheer exhaustion, mental and physical, under this form of indirect Kultur torture; only to be goaded on at the point of a bayonet.

At the psychological moment Germany calls for volunteers to join working parties. Many respond—with the idea, however, of possible escape. Germany does not exchange non-commissioned officers direct with England. Amputation cases and severely wounded are transferred to Switzerland, where they are interned. There are a great many cases, however, of prisoners who, though badly wounded and unable to work, are not sufficiently crippled to be sent there.

Nevers had a stiffened wrist as the result of his wound, which while it was not sufficient to warrant his being sent to Switzerland, yet incapacitated him

for work—and as a consequence he had to submit to this slow torture—and as far as I know is still undergoing it.

I have already described the conditions in the main prison camps. Prisoners do not stay any length of time in them for, unless disabled on account of injuries, they are soon shunted out to work.

Attached to each *lager* are a number of smaller camps under the jurisdiction of the commandant of the main *lager*. They are the working camps, and are called “colonies.” It is here that the prisoners that are made to work in civil occupations are confined. These colonies are in charge of a *feldwebel*, who never loses a chance to use the despotic power vested in him, for the prisoners under him are entirely at his mercy, as he is accountable to no one for his treatment of them. The food and quarters are about the same as in the main camps and, as there, there are no amusements or recreations provided.

We are continually meeting and making new friends and saying good-by to old ones, for as soon as we return from one job we are sent out to an-

other. Germany does not believe in keeping her prisoners in idleness.

In Hamelin there was a young *unter officier* who was rather friendly toward the English, having spent most of his life among them, but was on a visit to Germany when war was declared and was immediately pressed into military service. We used to have many chats together.

"What do you Germans think of us as workers?" I inquired one day.

"We have very little respect for you," he replied. "If I tell a Belgian or a Frenchman to do certain work he immediately answers: '*Oui, oui*,' and carries out the order; but with you English it is entirely different. When ordered to do anything, you don't do it until you have to. First you examine the job, next you debate in your own mind whether you will do it or not. While studying the situation, you draw your sack of tobacco from your pocket, leisurely roll a cigarette with great care, and then you ask a few questions. By this time you have made up your mind, and the chances are nine times out of ten you will put your hands in your pockets and

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walk away. It is only when forced that you do anything at all, and even then it does not amount to much."

Englishmen can certainly never be accused of overworking in Germany. They require many supervising sentries; they are continually in "prison" or undergoing other forms of punishment for refusing to work, or "loafing on the job" when they do work. The sentry in charge of an English working party frequently resorts to the butt end of his rifle, or to his bayonet, to urge these men to labor. Farmers will not have them, claiming they are too lazy, and the same is true of almost every employer of labor.

At one time the Russians and the English were sent out together on jobs, but this has now been stopped, as the Englishman, refusing to do any work himself, exerted a demoralizing influence on the Russians. The Englishmen would throw down their shovels, with the remark, "*Nicht arbeiten*"—the only two words the prisoners can say correctly, meaning "won't work." The Russians would immediately follow suit, leaving the sentry but one

recourse—to send them back to their main camp, there to await punishment.

The Russians, stolid, patient, never-complaining, take their punishment in mute submission. They could cause Germany a great deal of trouble if they only had some leaders with initiative.

At first the English prisoners refused to work, claiming *that it was contrary to The Hague Convention*. Germany next applied to London for permission to make them work. This was given—for them to work in civilian occupations, but once Germany had the permission she took the fullest advantage of it by informing the prisoners that the British authorities had given orders for them to work, and tried to send them to munitions plants, but unsuccessfully. She has done everything possible to force them; she has resorted to all forms of torture, but still she has not gained one inch. She has lined these fellows up against the wall and shot them; she has bayoneted them; beaten them; clubbed them with rifles; starved them, and handed out long terms of imprisonment, but all to no purpose. *They will die but they won't work in munitions plants.*

From the very start she has tried to break this British spirit, but she has been unsuccessful—and will always be. To-day Germany does not try to send British prisoners to the munitions works, as she knows she can not force them to make shells to fire against their own men. The day has been won but at a terrible cost.

Attached to every camp in Germany is a cemetery which, if it could yield up its secrets, would add a chapter to history before which the Spanish Inquisition would pale.

In a little clearing in the state forest at Celle is the graveyard, a fence has been built of the hewn trees, and on some of the graves grass has been sown and flowers planted by comrades of the dead. The relatives of some English and French have erected headstones, but wooden crosses mark the last resting-place of the poor Russians.

These cemeteries represent perhaps the saddest phase of the war. The man who dies on the field of battle is at least buried among friends, and his grave will be cared for by loving hands; but he who lies in the enemy's country will be assured of

such attention only as long as his comrades are there. Some day Germany will have to answer for these graves, for those who occupy them did not die as the result of wounds received in battle, but from disease brought on by unsanitary conditions, starvation, or from inhuman treatment.

A party of seven Englishmen were sent from Celle to Alhorn in the province of Oldenburg, ostensibly to work on a "farm." The "farm" proved to be a Zeppelin base. Here their captors tried to force them to assist around the hangars and to work on the Zeppelins themselves. The men knew that these machines of destruction visited England, dropping bombs that killed their women and children and destroyed their property, so they refused to work. "What! You refuse to work," said the *feldwebel*. "Yes," they replied in chorus. Turning to the sentries, he gave an order; they fixed their bayonets; the *unter officers* drew their swords—and charged, but it was only a bluff. They stopped short of their pretended purpose. "Do you still refuse to work?" demanded the *feldwebel*, in reply to which he again received a most decided



"Yes." He then ordered them to be put in prison on starvation rations—dry black bread and water. At intervals they were brought out, and on their persistent refusal were badly beaten. At the end of seven days, still refusing to work, the *feldwebel* ordered them to be placed against the wall, even going so far as to have a firing squad aim their rifles, but his bluff failed—he could not force them to work. He next returned them to Celle, there to await trial, which would take place in Berlin. A trial in Germany is only a farce, as no matter how small the crime or how great the extenuating circumstances, the prisoner is never allowed any defense and is always punished. These men were sentenced to three years in civil prison, unjustly, of course, and they knew it. Through the commandant they appealed directly to Mr. Gerard, who did everything he possibly could for the prisoners in Germany. Mr. Gerard worked night and day, visited the camps, interviewed thousands of the boys, and did all any one could to alleviate our sufferings, and right our wrongs. He gained the respect, the admiration and the love of all the prisoners in Ger-

many at that time. I often wonder to whom the boys turn now that he is no longer there.

The ambassador took this particular case up, and through his efforts the sentence was reduced from three years in a military to one year in a civil prison. Recently my seven friends were released and returned to Celle.

An intimate friend of mine, with others, was sent to the famous Krupp works at Essen, where he refused to work. The sentries and the officials tried every manner of persuasion, but failing, tried force, without success. The manager appeared, and read an order written in English, but very poorly, which was issued by the German authorities. He then tacked it on the door, but the prisoners still refused to work. Finding they could do nothing with them, the Germans sent them back to Celle and sentenced them to seven days' *strafe* and seven days' *clique*. Before leaving, while the sentry's back was turned, my friend was able to remove the "notice" from the door. He gave me several copies which I tried to smuggle out of Germany but was unsuccessful.

Anticipating this, I memorized it and can repeat it verbatim :

“You men are prisoners of war and as such are not entitled to the rights and privileges that you otherwise enjoy in your own country ; but you must obey whatever orders we, the Imperial German Government, see fit to issue. Although we recognize the rights of prisoners of war to refuse to work in munitions factories, we reserve the right to say as to what prisoners shall do, and furthermore will be responsible for the work the prisoners are engaged in; and further, that at the completion of your work, you will be given an order from the management of these works that you have been forced to work and did not do so of your own free will, and that after the war we, the Imperial German Government, will answer to His Britannic Majesty’s Government for what you have done; and furthermore, any prisoner refusing to follow out this order will be severely punished and in addition be forced to work.”

Suffice to say the men had no confidence in any

such assurances from "the Imperial German Government."

Previous to this war England has not been famed as an agricultural country, but strange to say practically every Englishman who is captured to-day is a farmer. They have become wonderful farmers. When Germany found that she could not force the British prisoners to work in munitions plants, she sent them to the farms. There they have done their work well. The German *hausfrau* has learned from long experience with these prisoners that she must watch them if she expects each potato to be dropped into its own individual hill. Left to themselves, the men usually dig a hole in some far corner, and dump the whole lot into it. English prisoners have sometimes been put to work laying tile pipes for draining. When it came to digging the trenches they proved expert—even the Germans will admit that—but at laying the pipes they were not quite so skilful—in fact, were even dull, as they could not be made to understand that it was necessary to connect the pipes. They would lay them length-

wise, crosswise and any wise, but no two pipes were ever connected.

In the work on the roads, canals, mines, railroads, and peat bogs, they never miss an opportunity of destroying wherever and whatever is possible. Frequently, of course, they are caught and punished, but that makes little difference to them as they are quite used to punishment. A party of English who had formerly been cavalymen were sent to a German cavalry base to look after horses, thereby relieving an equal number of Germans for the front. The English were there only three days, but during that time sixty horses died. Germany has tried this experiment but once.

A sentry will start out in the morning from a small working camp on a moor with a party of twenty Englishmen armed with twenty shovels to work on a canal. On arrival at their destination, the sentry finds he has twenty prisoners but only ten shovels, the other ten have mysteriously disappeared. He immediately flies into a terrible rage, which does not relieve the situation in the least. The

ten with shovels he sets to work, taking the other ten back to the camp for fresh equipment. This time he keeps a close watch to see that no shovels are lost. When he gets back to the moor he finds the original ten men waiting for further orders, having worked so hard in his absence that their shovels are worn out and useless. What follows can better be imagined than described.

Prisoners who work are paid at the rate of thirty-five pfennigs a day—seven and a half cents—and fortunately that is about all they are worth. Those who do not work receive nothing. Prisoners are not allowed to have German coins or paper money, only the stamps that are issued in each camp, which are our only medium of exchange. At no time are prisoners supposed to have more than ten marks. If a prisoner earns more, all over ten marks will be held for him. Frequently they hold inspections and all prisoners found with more than the allotted amount are punished and the money confiscated. No one escapes this inspection, whether in condition to work or not.

Punishment is the only thing with which the Ger-

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mans are liberal. The triviality of an offense does not deter them from meting out long sentences, and the pleasure of the officers in inflicting the punishment grows in proportion to its severity.

There are five grades of punishment. The first, for the more trivial offenses, is seven days in the *Straf Barracke*. While confined here the prisoner must do all the fatigues of the camp, and all "privileges" are denied him. No smoking is allowed and no conversation among prisoners. Two hours each day they are tied to a stake. They forfeit all rights to send or receive letters, but are allowed their parcels providing their fellow prisoners attend to them. They are allowed out for one hour each night. While in *straf* they must sleep on the floor.

Dark cells or *clique* is the next in order. This is very severe punishment. The cells are small, very dirty, without ventilation, and alive with vermin. No food is allowed other than prison bread and water. All parcels are refused, and the treatment by the sentries is always brutal. There is no furniture, the prisoners sleeping on the floor in a cramped position, as the cells are not large enough to allow a

man to stretch his full length. For one hour each day the prisoners are taken out for exercise, tied to one another with long ropes; their hands securely bound. They must keep a distance of ten feet apart and if one word is spoken the sentry is prompt in the use of the butt end of his rifle. Sometimes they carry long whips and frequently beat the prisoners unmercifully, without any cause whatever.

Next is "civil prison"; this punishment usually is for refusal to work. Here the treatment is almost more than a human being can stand. Even before the war Germany had an unenviable reputation for her prison conditions and her treatment of prisoners, so it is needless to dwell on what war prisoners may expect. It is enough to say that those who live through it return to camp almost unrecognizable—mere ghosts of their former selves.

The fourth form of punishment is a special one that is reserved for extreme cases of disregard of rules and resistance to German authority. It is called "On Command," and little is known of the form it takes, for few have returned to tell of it.



All that I have been able to learn of those who have returned is that they are "alive."

The fifth, or extreme, form of punishment is death, and this may be imposed without a trial, as any sentry has the power of life and death over his prisoners. A sentry may so goad a prisoner that in a moment of desperation he will strike at him, which means swift and sure punishment. Another grave is filled in the cemetery, and the offender has secured—not punishment, but freedom.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A FRIEND FROM MEDICINE HAT

"HEARD the latest rumor, boys?" We all gathered around the speaker.

"No, what is it?" we cried.

"Celle is to be closed and we are to be transferred."

"Where are we going?" But no one knew the answer.

Celle was among the smaller camps and we afterward discovered that these were being closed and the prisoners concentrated at the larger centers. As nearly as we could learn, the reason of the closing was on account of the shortage of guards. Soon the rumor became a fact and we received orders to pack all our belongings, including the library, and turn over everything except our food to the Germans. The time of leaving was definitely given out as six o'clock in the morning, which hour found

us all lined up in the large field adjacent to the *lazarett* outside the wire. In addition to our parcels of food, we also carried a blanket, a sack, a bowl and a spoon—to save transportation, no doubt. Then followed the usual enumeration, checking, counter-checking, inspection and the like before we could make a start. Well surrounded by guards we began our journey, without any long lingering backward glances toward our recent “home.” A string of cattle trucks was waiting for us on the siding, into which we were loaded. No arrangements had been made for feeding the prisoners, but fortunately we English had our parcels of food with us. We arrived at Soltau about two o’clock, where we were unloaded, and the counting and checking performance gone through with again—no mean task with five thousand men.

Soltau Lager is three miles from the town, which distance had to be covered on foot. The French, Belgians and Russians, evidently unwilling to take a chance, had not turned over their larger parcels to the Germans for transport, so that they resembled a long line of pack mules as they trudged

along. The wily Englishmen, ever ready to trust to luck, were burdened only with their food parcels. The number of guards was increased as we had to pass through a state forest and prisoners might be tempted to take a "vacation," much to the annoyance of the Germans. The French and Belgians led the march, followed by the Russians, the English bringing up the rear. Being so heavily laden, the pace was not very fast, and there were frequent halts for rest. Each halt sent the *feldwebels*, who were everywhere, into fresh paroxysms of anger. The coolness of the English was in inverse ratio to the heat of the *feldwebels*. In perfect military marching order we tramped along. "Let's have a song!" came from the ranks, and in answer came a deafening shout: "Are we down-hearted? No!" This was followed by *Tipperary*, then *You're Here and I'm Here, So What Do We Care; Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here; Let's All Go Down the Strand; Hello, Hello, Who's Your Lady Friend; One Grasshopper Sat Upon Another Grasshopper's Back; We'll All Do the Goose Step*, and many others—none of which the Germans could appreciate and for

none of which was their temper improved. On entering the camp we were greeted by cheers from a number of Englishmen lined up along the wire, and after considerable confusion we were finally assigned to a barracks at the lower end of the camp.

Soltau is one of the largest camps in Germany; forty thousand men can be confined within its barbed-wire enclosure. There were formerly three *lagers* but at present there are only two in use, the third having been demolished. The two *lagers* are separated by a road, but both are under the jurisdiction of one commandant. Soltau, like Celle, is situated on a moor, surrounded by state forests. The ground is a black sand, which gets into everything when dry and becomes a sticky black mud when wet.

The discipline at Soltau was not nearly so strict as in the other camps, owing to the more secure method of guarding. On a little rising to the east of the camp was a battery of field guns, sunk in their pits, with muzzles trained on the camp, loaded with shrapnel for instant use, while back of them were the limbers with sufficient reserve ammunition. The barracks of the gun crew were in the rear. A

complete series of entrenchments had also been constructed for use—if necessary. Every morning the gun crew was put through its evolutions and showed itself well trained and quite capable of handling any emergency.

Scattered throughout the camp were black and white range-finding boards mounted on posts, so that the artillery crew could pick up the ranges quickly and effectively.

The camp was divided by two thoroughfares running at right angles to each other, one a street and the other an avenue. The barracks were below the avenue, the administration buildings and offices above. The barracks were twice as long as in other camps, but were divided into only two rooms; consequently double the number of men slept in each room. The barracks had no foundation but were built directly on the ground, very loosely constructed, so that the black sand gains easy entrance. We did not have to sleep on the floor, this being one of the few camps where there are bunks. These were built in series of twelve, six below and six above. There were no tables or benches or shelves,

and we had to make our own. All of our belongings had to be kept in our bunks—the safest place as the camp was all but overrun with rats. The floor was of rough lumber and it was almost impossible to keep the place clean.

There was naturally a scramble for the bunks; which were soon made up with the sacks filled with leaves and straw from the supply barracks. "All who have no parcels fall out." Our gang immediately stepped forward. "Come with me to the committee," and we followed our leader.

In Soltau the English prisoners have established a general parcel fund, the purpose of which is to supply food to those whose parcels have not come through.

"You are from Canada I notice," said our leader, an R. A. M. C. man. "The storekeeper is also from there. Say, Billy, here is another Canadian," he called. The storekeeper stepped forward.

"Is that so? I'm from Medicine Hat. Where are you from?"

"I'm from there, too," I replied. "My name's Rossiter."

"Rossiter? Not 'Rosie' Rossiter, surely."

"The same," I assured him.

His hand shot out and seized mine in an iron grip. "Don't you remember me, old chap? I'm Simmons."

"Good lord, Billy! I thought you were dead. I never expected to see you again."

I had known Billy Simmons for the past ten years. He was among the first to enlist in 1914. After the Battle of Ypres in 1915 Billy had been reported "Missing," supposedly dead, and that was the last news I had heard of him. When he left Medicine Hat he had a mustache, but after his capture he had it shaved off, which explains my failure to recognize him at once. When I said good-by to Billy in Medicine Hat, with the remark "I'll see you in Berlin," little did I dream that we should meet ninety miles from there—both prisoners of war. He quickly disposed of the parcels to the waiting prisoners, and came back to me with an avalanche of questions.

"Of course you'll stay and have tea with me," an invitation I eagerly accepted. Billy had a fairly de-



cent supply of his own parcels on hand. Needless to say we had a meal befitting the occasion. It was days before we finished our mutual bombardment of questions. As Billy was alone he insisted on my taking my meals with him during the rest of my stay in Soltau.

Our party was absolved from all work until definite word was received as to what they were going to do with us. We had our usual classification, I being put in Column Five, (Swiss Exchange). For some reason, Columns Four and Five did not have to attend parade.

We still indulged in our after-dinner nap, and one afternoon, while so occupied, we were aroused by an awful commotion—shouting, bells ringing, etc. We rushed from our barracks and joined the crowd that was moving toward the gate. From a building in No. 2 Lager great clouds of smoke were rising and flames were bursting forth. A crowd soon gathered to see the fun. The Germans threw the gates wide open between the two camps, with an invitation for all to help fight the fire. French and Belgians rushed through, followed by a few Rus-

sians—but no English. They were quite content to remain on their side of the wire and view the scene from a distance. Knowing that I could not help, I went across, to get a closer view.

Germans were running hither and thither, giving an order one moment and countermanding it the next, *feldwebels* were in a towering rage, and every one was excited. The volunteer fire brigade (Belgians and French) arrived, all out of breath, with the fire engine and hose. The Russians and French were set to work at the pumps, and soon had a small stream of water playing on the fire. Some of the volunteers climbed to the roof, and with their axes commenced to demolish it, but their puny efforts were for naught as the fire gained on them faster than they could work. With a cheer another pump and another line of hose arrived. Still the flames gained. Then a gang was organized to try to demolish the building, but by this time the heat was so intense that it was impossible to work anywhere near it. The barracks next began to smoke and the fighting forces were diverted in an attempt to save this. A great cheer went up from the Eng-

lish on the other side of the wire when the efforts proved unsuccessful and this building was enveloped in flames. When the fighters realized that it was impossible to save this barracks they turned their attention to those next, keeping a continual stream of water upon them, and thus confined the fire to the two original buildings, which burned to the ground.

It was most amusing to watch the Russians, who manned the pumps. So long as the *feldwebel* was watching them they worked diligently, but let his back be turned but for a moment and they quietly disappeared, to be caught by another energetic German and set to work once more, only to disappear again; but all the time with a smile on their faces, apparently enjoying themselves hugely.

Every now and then some excited German would rush up and grab me by the arm and order me to work, but would hurry away in disgust when I took my hand from my pocket and showed it to him.

In about two hours the fire burned itself out and all that remained were two piles of smoldering ruins. The sight of these burned buildings gave us all a

great sense of satisfaction, as they had been used as store rooms and were filled with food and bedding material—straw, blankets, etc.

Each nationality had a church or chapel. The Russians were fortunate in having a priest for their church and religious services were held every morning and evening. The same is true of the French and Belgians. Half a barracks was set aside for our use and was chapel, library and recreation room, all in one. It was in charge of two former members of the Imperial Cavalry—who had their rooms in the rear. They made the tables, the chairs, the benches, the altar, and indeed every article of furniture in the building, with their own hands.

One afternoon I was sitting in the recreation room working on a jig-saw puzzle, when Corporal Edwards came in with an invitation to join them at tea. During the meal they told me about their work, and apparently took pride in showing me what they had accomplished. Though having no larger supply of food than the rest of us, they were continually inviting the boys to have tea with them, especially the recent arrivals, and established a rep-

utation for hospitality that the boys were not slow to appreciate.

A very popular building at night was the beer garden, with its imitation stained-glass windows; its vine-covered trellis-work, and its profusion of flowers. Everything was complete, even to the white-coated waiters—French and Belgian prisoners. Only the very lightest wines and a substitute for beer were sold, but in spite of the high prices it was the rendezvous of the camp at night.

Soltau had the usual canteen, but like all other camps, the post-card was its chief article of merchandise.

There was also a splendid gymnasium, partly open-air, where the prisoners had constructed a small cinder track, and a number of roughly improvised gymnasium appliances.

"Why all the excitement, Bill?" I asked one Sunday morning.

"There is to be church service this afternoon in Soltau Village. Are you going?"

"Sure," I answered; "who's going to preach?"

"The German Lutheran minister. He occasion-

ally gets permission from the commandant for us to attend his church."

Every one was busy polishing buttons, cleaning boots, brushing uniforms, or borrowing from those who were not going, in order to make a presentable appearance. Billy scurried about and got me another pair of shoes from somewhere, also a hat that was an improvement over the German fatigue cap I was wearing. We next blew six cents getting a shave at a Belgian barber shop and at two o'clock were lined up at the gate where under a heavily armed guard we marched to the strangest service I have ever attended.

It was a beautiful day and we were glad to be out from behind the barbed wires and enjoyed the exercise of marching. A sentry led the procession as we entered the church, and others were so scattered throughout the column that when we were seated there was a sentry at the end of each pew, while others stood on guard at the doors with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets. The service in English, conformed to the liturgy of the Church of England and was reverently followed and appreciated.

The minister preached a sermon on "brotherly love," which seemed appropriate under the circumstances. At the conclusion, the collection plate was passed, but as we did not have silver or other regular coins, we dropped in the *lager* stamps.

A service of this kind is held about once a month. It is unique from the fact that it is about the only place in Germany where the boys have an opportunity to attend church in the conventional way.

One morning word was passed around the camp that the Reverend Mr. Williams, our old friend from Hanover, was to preach in the chapel at ten. At the appointed hour the place was filled with Englishmen—not one was absent—shaved and groomed in honor of the occasion. Mr. Williams' message was one of cheer and hope for the future. The service lasted an hour and immediately after Mr. Williams hurried off to his train, as he was due to preach elsewhere later in the day. It takes him three months to make a complete tour of the camps.

Soltau had a rattling good football team, made up of the best players regardless of nationality. When we arrived from Celle they promptly chal-

lenged us. The challenge was accepted, the team picked and the date set. This caused great excitement throughout the camp, and on the afternoon of the game a huge crowd was on hand to witness the sport. The news even traveled as far as the German sentries and quite a number of them turned out. I am not going to describe the game; it's enough to say Soltau gave us an awful beating.

One evening about ten o'clock some of the fellows were writing, others reading, while in one corner a game of the Great American National Indoor Sport was in progress. About this time a Belgian who lived in our barracks walked in with an accordion and began to play a dance tune. A stand was made for the "orchestra" at once, partners chosen, and the fun began. What a glorious time, and what a noise! The floor was not exactly polished hardwood; the dancers' boots were heavy and well studded with hob-nails, but the fun was infectious and it was impossible to keep from joining in; but at the climax, in walked the *feldwebel*. There was instant silence.

"Englishmen, be ready to move to-morrow morn-



ing at five-thirty. You will leave all your parcels behind. These will be forwarded to you later."

"Well, I for one do not intend to leave my food," said one fellow, and we all agreed to take at least half of our supply with us.

Five-thirty the next morning found five thousand Russians, Belgians, French and English lined up in the square. We were marched to the siding, packed tightly into cattle trucks, and were promptly started on one of the strangest journeys ever known. At every town and village that we came to the train stopped and we were given a rousing reception. People cheered us madly, but the climax was reached when we arrived at Hanover. The town had turned out en masse to welcome us—every one from the burgomaster down to the smallest child. We could not understand it. We thought perhaps peace had been declared, or that the Germans had won some great victory. We asked the sentry what it all meant. Our surprise can be imagined when he told us *that we were a new bunch of prisoners just captured on the Somme*. Thus was the cheering explained. This was Germany's method of convinc-

ing her citizens that their armies were still victorious on the western front. The people had begun to be uneasy as to the Somme, the English and French were attacking successfully, capturing many miles of trenches and villages. The Germans were counter-attacking and retaking positions that were always a mile or so nearer Germany. Also the letters from their boys at the front were none too encouraging—so something had to be done to bolster up the courage of the folks at home, and we were that “something.” A war loan was being floated at that time so we called the train “The War Loan Special.”

We made our final stop a few miles outside of Hamelin. Here we unloaded at Hamelin Lager. Our journey was at an end.

## CHAPTER XVII

### HAMELIN

"HERE is the camp where the old 'stick game' is played to a finish. You might just as well throw them away, for they are of no use to you here."

The gates of Hamelin opened wide and as we entered we were greeted thus by a small knot of Englishmen.

Our "stickmen" paid no attention to these warnings, continuing to limp, some with a crutch, a stick or even a sawed-off shovel handle that was too short by far, "swinging the lead" perfectly as they entered the camp.

Hamelin at first glance appeared rather attractive. It was located on the side of a small grass-covered hill to the south of the town. It was divided into two regiments, one on the level ground, the other in rows or terraces on the side of the hill.

Each regiment was separated by an avenue fifty yards wide and about three hundred yards long.

The camp was a mass of beautiful flowers; every inch of ground that could be spared had been turned into a garden.

The main entrance to the administration building and the commandant's office resembled a flower show—a riot of dahlias, asters, pansies, sunflowers and sweet-peas.

But those flowers were like a cat's paw—they covered sharp claws. Hamelin is noted for its flowers—and its barbed wire. No matter where you turn you are faced with it. Barbed wire surrounds everything.

The discipline at Hamelin is very strict, the smallest offense being punished with great severity. The guards are heavily armed, and there are machine guns on every side, and at every turn. Inside the enclosures there are also many sentries. Prisoners are compelled to salute the *unter officier*, or suffer punishment. There is no use trying to go against orders here; it's like butting up against a brick wall. They have the upper hand and are only too willing to use it.

There was one *feldwebel*—fat, ugly and brutal—

who, glorying in his authority, used to march up and down the main avenue accompanied by armed sentries, demanding a salute from every prisoner that he met. Any one failing to respond immediately was placed under arrest and without being given a trial was thrown into prison and kept there for seven days on a diet of bread and water.

Transient prisoners are not expected to do much work, as a regular staff is kept for that purpose, picked from the different nationalities that are permanently imprisoned there. Hamelin is only a clearing camp from which prisoners are soon sent out to work.

There is little space for exercise other than in the main avenue, which is always crowded. On the hill above the second regiment is a level spot which is supposed to be for recreation, but it is closed except from five until seven at night, so that it is of little benefit to the prisoners. The commandant has had a small grandstand constructed for himself and his staff to witness the games of football that are occasionally arranged between the different nationalities.

Hamelin is designed to hold ten thousand prisoners and most of the time it is full to capacity—so that it is far from being a “comfortable” camp.

At eight-thirty the prisoners are locked in their barracks and the dogs are then turned loose to guard the camp. They are very vicious and are trained to attack at sight any one not dressed in the field gray of the German army. All night long, until six in the morning, when the doors are unlocked, they prowl about the camp, and their frequent baying often made life miserable and sleep impossible. All of the camps were at one time guarded by such dogs, but owing to the shortage of food they have since disappeared. Prisoners never leave their barracks, for they know if they elude the dogs they will be shot by the sentries, who have orders to fire at sight on any one found moving about after hours. The lights are left burning all night long so that the sentries can see what is going on, which also adds to the discomfort of the prisoners.

As in Celle, we slept on the floor. The food here was even worse than at the other camps—small

quantities, poorly cooked. The canteen was the usual canteen, but there was no chapel or recreation room for any nationality.

"Come for a walk," said Boxer. Supper was over and our things had been stored away, so I joined him.

"There is something I want to show you." We climbed the path and crossed the recreation ground.

"Look at those." I saw a number of long rows of what appeared to be piles of sod, covered with canvas.

"What are they?" I asked.

"They are known as the 'slutches' of Hamelin." Then he told me the story of those piles of sod—a story that is almost unbelievable—for those piles of sod had once been the habitation of the prisoners.

"After the capture at Mons in 1914," continued Boxer, "the officers tried every known method to force us to give the positions of our guns and tell the size of our forces. They beat us, and kicked us, and many of the chaps were bayoneted, but they got no information out of us. They loaded us into cattle trucks—wounded and unwounded—and

shunted us through Belgium and Germany. On the way we suffered from the cruelest kind of treatment from the German people. Finally they dumped us out at Hamelin and drove us into an open field. It was surrounded with barbed wire with plenty of sentries to guard us. They gave us each a blanket, but no ground sheet, and we had to sleep in the open. Often it rained and we would get soaked through. We would huddle together in small groups, trying to keep warm. The wounded were not segregated and no attention was given to them. When winter came on they set us to work to build these slutches. We built platforms of sod one hundred feet long, five and a half feet wide and four feet in height. Then they gave us a piece of canvas for protection. We stretched this over a frame one and a half feet high on one side and fastened to the sod on the other. Each platform was divided into sections fifty feet long. They drove us into these hovels at five-thirty at the point of the bayonet, which was frequently used. We were jammed in so tight that we were lying on top of each other. There wasn't room enough for us to



stretch out straight and we were kept there all night, till eight o'clock the next morning. Without any ventilation or sanitation, you can well imagine our condition after a few days—we would not have passed the inspection of the health department, I assure you. We lived in those slutches all winter long. We had no baths and there was no chance for washing. There wasn't much food, and what there was was poor. The French and Belgians could usually get a second helping, but when we tried, the cooks used to turn the hose on us. All day long they forced us to march in a circle. Fellows would drop from sheer exhaustion, but they were picked up and beaten or prodded on with a bayonet. Many were so done up that they couldn't continue, but the bayonet soon put them out of their misery. The ground was covered with snow. Some of us had shoes, but more of us hadn't, the Germans took them when we were captured, so that we had to march in our bare feet. We had very little clothing—some none at all, except underwear. With the kind of treatment given us, it wasn't very long before we were all in rags. How so many of us lived through

it is beyond me. In the spring we built the barracks you see below. The present life is bad enough but it's nothing in comparison with the early days. The Black Hole of Calcutta is about the only thing I can imagine that could have been worse."

"Well, I certainly don't envy you your experience, Boxer," I remarked as we retraced our steps.

The fleas, bad enough in the other camps, were "tame" compared with the Hamelin variety, which was specially vicious. There was no relief from them. We would hang our blankets all day long on the wire, but the fleas would only be worse that night. Large red spots appeared on my leg, gradually swelling and finally breaking into abscesses. They became very painful and I applied to the infirmary for relief. The "doctor" (student) refused to do anything for me, but Tommy, an English R. A. M. C. man, appropriated a couple of bandages, and with the aid of a needle, sterilized by being put in the flame of a candle, treated and dressed them each day. The number increased, but Tommy was unable to purloin any more bandages, so the sores had to remain exposed. Tommy's methods were

crude and the abscesses gained on him. At night the pain was almost intolerable and I could not sleep, even if I lay down during the day—they drove me from the barracks.

A number of prisoners working in a salt mine where the heat was intense removed their shirts and stripped to the waist. Fine particles of salt fell from the roof on their sweating backs, caking there and eventually causing large open sores. They applied for medical treatment at the mine, which was refused, but later, as the men grew worse, they were sent back to camp. Here they were kept for a few days, but as the medical authorities couldn't, or wouldn't, treat them, they were sent back to the mine in the same condition in which they left it. The men were desperate. They refused to go down in the mine, and the sentries charged on them with fixed bayonets. One of the prisoners now fills a grave in the prison cemetery; the rest were forced to work—only being relieved when they were utterly exhausted, then they were sent to a farm, where nature had a chance to practise her healing arts.

At Wittenburg, in December, 1914, there was an

outbreak of typhus fever. The German staff, military and medical, immediately left the camp, and there was no communication between the prisoners and the guards, except when orders were shouted from outside the wire entanglements, until August, 1915. All supplies for the men were pushed into the camps over chutes, and of course no medical attention during the whole time was provided by the German staff. Had it not been for the English and Russian doctors, scarcely any of the men would have survived. Hundreds died from this dread disease, and many of the doctors lost their lives in treating them.

The same condition existed in Schneidmuhle and Gardelegen. In the former four thousand prisoners died in the course of two months, and in the latter over two thousand.

At first our party was to have been sent out without a medical examination, but on receipt of this information we all went sick, making it necessary for the authorities to examine us. The "stick men" were again successful in "putting one over" on the doctor, being placed in Column Three. I was placed

in Column Four, to be examined for Swiss exchange—thanks to my little clover leaf.

Swiss exchange is for all N. C. O.'s who are incapacitated by their wounds, prisoners who have contracted some disease and are convalescent, or those requiring an operation. All such are interned in Switzerland and only repatriated at the conclusion of the war.

"Aren't you going to be examined for the exchange?"

Dinner was over. I was lying on my bed (allotted space on the floor) reading Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*.

"What exchange?" I cried.

"Why, there is to be an examination for English exchange this afternoon. Better hurry or you'll be too late."

Without waiting to hear more I rushed to the gate, arriving just in time, the other English having passed through and the sentry about to close it. The Englishmen were lined up in front of the *lazaretto*. Most of them knew that they could not pass, but were at least going to make an attempt.

"*Achtung!*" ordered the *feldwebel*; and we all sprang to attention as the doctor appeared. He examined each prisoner, asking me many questions when my turn arrived, and ordered me to wait after the others were dismissed, that he might make another examination. He then told me to report the next morning at ten o'clock. The fellows all congratulated me, assuring me that I would be sent to England, but I refused to believe them.

The next morning, they all went with me to the gate, but the sentry refused to allow them to go farther. After a careful examination the doctor informed me that I would be sent to England.

"You are very fortunate," said his orderly—a Belgian. "When he says that, you are certain of going through."

"When shall I leave?" I asked.

"In a few days," but I couldn't believe it.

Days passed but no word was received. One morning I was told to report at a certain barrack. When I got there I found a great many men being examined for a working party.

"What are you here for?"

"For English exchange," I replied.

They looked through my papers and found nothing to prove the truth of my statement. I was passed for a working party.

"What did I tell you?" I said to the boys when I got back. "I'm here to stay;" but that afternoon another order came. I was to take all my clothing and effects to the administration building at ten o'clock the next morning to be censored, preparatory to my leaving for Aachen the day following.

I reported promptly the next morning. All my clothing was taken from me and I was issued with another outfit to wear while my own was being censored. I felt and no doubt looked like a circus clown. When I returned to the barracks even the Russians smiled; the boys simply howled. I had on a uniform of indiscriminate nationality—all being represented. I was wearing a pair of dark canvas boots with heavy wooden soles, blue socks, a pair of French blue riding breeches with facings of yellow, which terminated just below the knee. The space between them and the socks showed an exposure of bright red underwear. The tunic was

a light brown, and the hat of a *gefangenen* type—blue with a yellow stripe and no peak. I was too frightened to stir from the barracks all day long, for fear of causing a riot. At eight-thirty, as usual, we were locked in and the dogs turned loose to guard the camp. The fellows all gathered around my bed, giving advice and messages, while others attended to my lunch. I said good-by to them all then, as I should be leaving before they arose the next morning. Happy as I was over going home, the pleasure was marred by the thought of leaving behind these friends, who had thus far shared my fate, many of whom perhaps I shall never see again. There was much I should like to have done in parting, but all I could do was to assign my parcels to my old mucking-in gang—three of the best friends that any one could wish for: Blaxland, Wardle and Martin. May the Fates soon be as kind to them as they have been to me.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### WELCOME HOME

THE night was hot, almost to the point of suffocation; and as the lights were kept burning, sleep was impossible. Even the fleas knew I was leaving, and made a farewell attack, their objective being the abscesses. This increased irritation and poisoning did not tend to lessen the pain, which was already most excruciating. I tossed about on my hard pallet, but sleep refused to come. Outside, the dogs kept up their all-night howling. The hours dragged by.

The *chef de compagnie* came for me at four o'clock. At the *commanditur* I changed into my other clothes. The censoring had been very thorough. Practically nothing remained of the souvenirs I had originally turned in. I had overlooked leaving my lunch to be censored, and the *feldwebel* insisted on seeing what I was carrying. My lunch

consisted of two tins of beans, a tin of salmon and a tin of biscuits—all heavily soldered.

The Germans evidently give us credit for being very clever. The *feldwebel*, suspecting that I might be carrying out some information in these tins, insisted on opening them. But Germany overlooks the most necessary censoring of all. She forgets that Englishmen are not like her own men, but have eyes for observation, and brains to retain impressions. Finding that I was carrying nothing that would be of benefit to the enemy, he turned me, my baggage and lunch over to the waiting sentry. And my first step toward freedom was taken.

It was still dark as I marched through the streets of Hamelin, and I had no opportunity of seeing the famous home of the Pied Piper. I often wish that another Piper would arise and pipe the poor prisoners away. I don't think he would leave a sad and grieving population behind him, nor would they erect a monument to commemorate the deed.

As usual, the train was late, not arriving until seven-thirty. As I had had nothing to eat before leaving the camp, I opened my parcel, and the sen-

try sitting opposite had his breakfast also: only a ration of bread.

I could not eat all of the salmon or beans, so rather than throw them away I shared them with my guard. "*Danke schön*," he said as he greedily devoured the luxuries which were such a rare treat to him.

We changed trains at Hanover City, leaving there at eight-thirty. The heat soon became intense, and I began to feel rather ill, aching in every part of my body. Increased inflammation and swelling from the abscesses caused severe pain. The third-class coach was crowded to its capacity. I appealed to the sentry several times for water, telling him I was *krank*, only to be met by repeated refusals. When I arrived at Soltau I was almost in a state of collapse. Again I appealed for water, but my only response was a stern command to *marsch*. Somehow I dragged myself to the *commanditur*, a mile from the station. Here I was given a few moments' rest while the sentry made his report. On his return he commanded me to *marsch*, but I refused until I was given water. This angered him,

and only after continued refusals did he grant my request, sending me after the water when he learned where it could be obtained.

Then began the worst march of all. I was carrying a small parcel weighing about six pounds, containing Paddy's afghan and a change of underwear, but it was a ton before that march came to an end. Every hundred yards or so I had to stop for a rest. Each stop increased the anger of the sentry. About half-way we met an officer. As I was too ill to salute I merely came to attention. The sentry, who was behind me, did his three "goose steps" (the German method of saluting) after which he attended to me with a number of vicious kicks. I was too ill to protest or resist. From then on, every time I attempted to rest he goaded me on by the same method. And this was the fellow who, earlier in the day, had accepted my beans and my salmon. Germany does not understand consideration or kindness—to her they are only signs of weakness. All that she knows, all that she recognizes, is force—brute force.

I arrived at Soltau Camp "all in." I hunted up

Billy, who put me to bed, promising to call me at five for a farewell supper. At that hour I was too ill to eat—a significant fact, so I returned to bed and slept through the night. The next morning I met the other three fellows who were going for exchange. They were old friends of mine from Hanover City. I was told that Zappfe, Dyer and some of the other fellows had also come in from Hanover at the same time, and were confined in the *lazarett*. I spent the balance of the morning with them. I had dinner with Billy, after which I reported at the administration building to be examined.

We were loaded on to a wagon with straw, and drawn into town by a number of Belgians hitched to it like so many horses. I sat on the end, looking back at the camp until a sharp turn in the road hid it from view. The last I saw of Soltau was Billy standing at the wire waving his handkerchief in farewell. Billy is still there. I wonder when I shall next see him.

A special coach had been reserved for us on the train—a fourth-class carriage. How different from the way England sends her German prisoners home!

Instead of a Red Cross train with beds to sleep on, plenty of food, good clothes and proper attention, we slept on a pile of rushes that had been scattered on the floor of the coach, and the food was thrust into the carriage as you'd shove a piece of raw meat into a cage of wild animals. I was the only one who could move about or do anything, the others being bed cases.

We arrived at Aachen late the next afternoon, and noticed at once a change in treatment. Instead of walking there were automobiles to convey us. The examination was made in a building known as the "Glass House," owing to its peculiar construction. There were long rows of beds, and also orderlies and nurses, who treated us very kindly, trying no doubt to erase past memories from our minds.

I was sitting at a table, waiting to be assigned to a bed.

"Hello, Canadian, what part are you from?"

"Why, hello, yourself," I replied; "I'm from the west, and you?"

"I'm from Montreal. I belong to the Princess Pats."

"When were you captured?"

"The second of June. When were you?"

"The same day."

We then introduced ourselves. Palliser, for that was my new friend's name, located a bed for me.

"What's the place like?" I asked.

"This is 'Jake,' " he replied, "in comparison with other places. Here we get three meals a day and are treated like human beings."

"When is the examination to take place?"

"In two days. By that time all the fellows will have congregated from all over Germany. Think you'll get through?"

"Well, I'm not building any castles in the air, so I won't be too badly disappointed if I don't. What you up here with?"

"Stiff elbow, and I sure hope I get through."

The next morning after breakfast while I was making a tour of inspection with Palliser, we noticed a pile of kit bags belonging to fellows who had come in during the night. One of them caught my eye. It was marked, "Grant, 13th Battalion, Canadians."

"Good lord, Palliser; I wonder if that's my old friend."

I looked around the room and finally recognized the back of his old familiar head. "Hello, Grant, what are you doing here?" I cried as I reached his bed. "I thought you were in Switzerland."

"Hello, Rosie, I certainly never expected to see you here."

Then followed explanations. Grant had been stopped at Mannheim where the plaster cast was taken from his leg and the doctors advised amputation. So he was on his way home.

"Gee!" I said, "won't it be great if we both get through!"

Examination took place the next morning at ten o'clock. I was finished at eleven. The examining board consisted of a major, a colonel and a surgeon-general of the German army. Only those who are incapacitated succeed in passing that board, and no one was told at the time whether he had passed or not. Dinner was served at eleven-thirty, but every one was too excited to eat. The suspense was awful. At one o'clock an orderly stepped into the room and



began a roll call. We all stood or sat in tense anxiety, for the men whose names he was calling would not go to England—would not go home, but would be sent back to camp. They packed their things and left immediately. We shook hands and wished them good-by. We all felt like crying. The fellows that had failed had all been confident of going home, for they were told when they left the hospital that they were going right through to England. It was a keen disappointment. I was delighted when my name did not appear on that roll.

“I’m safe,” I told Palliser, “because if I hadn’t passed I’d be going with them.”

I had not been confident, for I was familiar with the method and knew what to expect, but now that I was certain of going home I could hardly control myself.

“I wish I were as sure as you are,” said Palliser.

At four-thirty another roll was called. These were cases the German surgeons had made such a mess of that they were ashamed to send them home. Only a few were on this list but they were broken-hearted. The rest of us were for England! Both

Grant and Palliser had passed. What a happy bunch we were, though our happiness was tempered with regret for those unfortunates who had to stay longer in Germany. That night we had a regular celebration, eating all our food, but we were too excited to sleep. The next day dragged by somehow.

"I feel that we ought to tip these orderlies," I told Palliser, as we packed our belongings early that morning.

"They have been good to us," he said; "I suggest we give them our soap."

So we gathered together every scrap of soap we had and presented it to the orderlies—probably one of the strangest tips ever known. It was far more appreciated than money would have been, soap being very scarce in Germany. They wrapped each piece separately and carefully, to send to their *fraus* back home. There was nothing those fellows would not do for us after that. The good treatment at Aachen was all for a purpose, as we discovered that afternoon. A party of neutral newspaper men was shown through the building, and we were all exhibited as samples of German prisoners. The news-

paper men are never allowed to visit any of the camps. A number of autos conveyed us to the station at four o'clock, where we went through the usual count and examination, happily for the last time.

A Red Cross train was waiting to take us on our last journey in charge of the German military authorities.

We passed the barrier ten at a time. One of the boys, a mental case, who happened to be an eleventh man and thought he was being left behind, broke into tears and was only pacified when safely ensconced in his berth. There were nurses and doctors on this train, but we needed little attention.

How different from the way we had been treated on previous journeys; then we needed attention and there was none offered. No doubt this was to make an impression on the Dutch people the next day.

"Are you hungry?" inquired the head nurse, when we were finally loaded in the cars. We had had our supper before leaving the hospital, but we all answered "Yes!" and had the satisfaction of an extra meal at Germany's expense.

We crossed the Belgian frontier at ten o'clock the following morning. The German guards left the train and the Dutch took their places. We noticed the difference immediately. No sign of starvation, or depression, no empty fields, and no discontent—instead there was a general atmosphere of good cheer. The Dutch people were contented and pleasant and every one had a smile for us. The fields were filled with fat sleek cattle; plentiful crops on every side; everything looked prosperous.

At Rosendahl we stopped for an hour, where the whole town turned out en masse to greet us enthusiastically. Knowing the terrible privation we had endured, they had prepared accordingly. First came Dutch wheat rolls spread with Dutch butter and sandwiched with slices of Dutch cheese. There was also tea—with cream and sugar! What joy—no more burnt acorn coffee without sugar, or even milk. Then the good people marched through the train and loaded us with chocolate, tobacco, cigarettes and fruit. It was useless to refuse; they left them on our beds and passed on. Two women, representatives of the British Red Cross, boarded the

train here. One came to our car. We all stopped talking, and a thrill ran through the crowd as she greeted us with: "Welcome home, boys!" We thought our ears were deceiving us. That was not a human voice but an angel's! Her beautiful, soft, well-modulated tones sounded sweeter to us than the richest tones of some great singer. When she was ready to pass on to the next car, we refused to let her go. We begged her to stay with us all day. We had not seen or spoken to an English woman for many months. She told us the latest war news, and spoke of the tanks. We were at a loss to understand what she meant for we had never heard of tanks, but hesitated to interrupt her for fear she might recall that she had duties elsewhere, and leave us.

Our attention was divided among three attractions: our Red Cross "angel," the passing scenery, and the latest papers from London, containing what was to us the first real news of the results of the battle on the Somme.

Occasionally we were attracted by loud cheering, and on looking out of the window, found that we

were slowly passing through a town or village and everybody from the burgomaster down to the smallest child had gathered at the station to give us a hearty welcome and good wishes on our journey.

Such was our trip through Holland, with only one stop, at Rotterdam, arriving at The Hook at three-thirty, where we found another big reception awaiting us. The British ambassador to Holland, and his wife, and the representatives of the other embassies were here to welcome us. The good women of The Hook had made the big waiting-room comfortable with many cushions and they overwhelmed us with kindness and much delicious food.

The boat arrived with the German prisoners from England at about four o'clock. They immediately disembarked and were taken to a separate room. Once the English and the Germans were put in the same room, but this practise was discontinued, for the sight of the Germans in their neat warm clothing, and their general appearance of having been well fed and cared for was too much for the Englishmen in their tatters and with their bitter memories of German ill-treatment and abuse. A general

free-for-all was the result, in which, as could be expected, the English did not come off second best, notwithstanding their emaciated condition.

After being supplied with coffee and sandwiches by the women, the German prisoners were put on the Red Cross train we had just vacated and started on their journey back to their *Vaterland*, a prospect, according to all reports, that they did not greatly relish.

"There is a vast difference in the returned prisoners," said one of the ladies. "You English are all smiling and delighted at the prospect of going home, while the Germans have no smiles, and are not quite so eager to get home as you are. You are going where you will have plenty to eat and good care. They have just left your country where they were well treated and are returning to rationed food and hardships and an uncertain future."

We boarded the boat about seven o'clock—once more under the protection of the British flag. We were greeted with a hearty "Welcome home, boys," from the captain, which was echoed in every quarter of the ship, and at every turn we were cheerfully

confronted by placards, adding their mute but eloquent greeting.

It was a hilarious crowd that sat down to supper that night, but our hilarity did not interfere with our appetites. At the conclusion an impromptu concert was arranged by the soldiers and sailors, and the captain was called on for a speech.

"I have some very pleasant news for you," he said. "We must handle you with care as you are of great value. We brought over quantity and are taking back quality. We exchanged ninety-eight German prisoners for you fifty-seven."

A great cheer burst forth from the crowd. We swelled up our chests over this, but our conceit was punctured when some one remarked that while we were worth two Germans the boys at the front had proved that each was worth four or five of them any day, at which the cheering broke out afresh. Sleep was not long in coming to us that night.

We were awakened the next morning at five by the throb of the engines as the ship started on its return trip to England. The sea was rather choppy, the ship none too large and we had all dined



the day before not wisely but too well. All of which combined to produce the inevitable. For once we refused our breakfast.

About eleven o'clock some of us began to feel a little better and crawled up on deck. The bright sun and the sea breezes, clear, cold and crisp, soon revived our drooping spirits and gave us a splendid appetite for dinner. By one-thirty we were ravenous. Dinner was all that could be desired—in fact it was the realization of our fondest dreams. Back in Hanover we often discussed our ideal meal: roast beef, lots of gravy, new potatoes, green cabbage, with large pieces of Yorkshire pudding—and here it was spread before us—an actual fact; with the addition of rice custard and bananas. We were told we could have a second helping, and although we did our best, our appetites were not as large as our eyes.

Dinner over, we gathered at the bow of the boat, straining our eyes to get a first glimpse of England, but all we could see were ships, and more ships—ships in front of us, ships behind us, ships on either side, forming two long lines, between which we

steamed. Truly England's sea power is great. All these ships were going toward England, loaded with food and munitions, and the German navy was unable to stop them. Other ships passing us and recognizing the Red Cross, exchanged salutes. The pilot boat drew alongside and the pilot was taken on board; supper was called, but few deserted their posts until a tiny speck appeared on the port bow. Soon we were sailing up the River Thames. The boat docked at eight o'clock, and a great crowd welcomed us. The boys lined the rail, yelling, cheering and singing. Every one was excited and happy. Some one in the crowd on shore yelled: "Are we down-hearted?" and a deafening roar came back from the boat in answer: "No! Pack all your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile!" A mighty cheer rent the air as we came down the gang-plank—on British soil at last. While waiting for our train another feast was served to us. Each fellow had the personal and individual attention of a most charming young lady, whose every thought was for his comfort and entertainment. Can we be blamed for our reluctance to continue our journey?

It was some job for the attendant to get us aboard. Had the train been half an hour late, I am quite sure it would have been necessary to call a clergyman.

We pulled into Euston Station amid wild and uproarious cheering. A huge crowd had gathered to give us our "Welcome Home." They had been waiting for hours: some who had received cables that their boys were coming home; others who came in the hope of hearing from some missing one; and still others who, though they knew they would never again see their own, came to add their share to the welcome. There was a final outburst as we made our appearance on the platform—and then a breathless silence, broken suddenly by "There he is!" "There's Jim!" as a happy wife pushed her way through the crowd and was gathered up in the strong arms of her man. Or a feeble cry and waving of handkerchiefs as some mother caught sight of her boy who was once "missing" and whom she never expected to see again, but now returned to her again—minus an arm or a leg maybe; but what mattered that—he was alive and was never to leave her. And then there were the sweethearts, ready

to welcome their warriors home with fond embrace, eagerly awaiting the day when the marriage ceremony could be performed, willing to work for and support if necessary the dear one who had suffered so much for his country. Ah, you English girls, you are the most wonderful girls in the world! Willing to sacrifice yourselves, to work, to bear almost any burden, to love, that you may bring joy and sunshine into these men's lives. May you never rue the day that you so gladly took up your new life; and may every joy and blessing be yours!

An opening was made in the crowd so that we could pass through to the waiting motors. Eager hands reached forth to grasp ours; hearts were too full for utterance, but words were unnecessary. Those handclasps expressed far more eloquently than human voice, the gratitude of the Empire.

As we entered the waiting motors roses were showered upon us, and our ward in the hospital the next day resembled a flower show.

We were four hours late in arriving, but the nurses waited up for us, and did not retire until all had been attended to and made comfortable for

the night. The lights were turned low and soon all that could be heard was the regular deep breathing of the happy tired sleepers. I alone seemed to be awake, as the events of the past months raced through my mind and would not let me sleep. My thoughts naturally crossed the ocean, to the folks at home, and in imagination I fancied the joy that my cablegram would bring them, announcing my exchange, my safe arrival in England and the near date of my departure for Canada.

From my right came a whisper: "Rosie." Paliser was still awake.

I whispered back: "What is it?"

"I have just thought of something."

"What?"

"Do you remember how many of us there were?"

"Why, fifty-seven. What of it?"

"Did any two of us look alike?"

"I hope not."

"Well, say, our exchange will surely go down in history then."

"What for?" I asked.

"Why, we'll be known as the 'Heinz' Exchange."

"Why, 'Heinz'?" I stupidly asked.

"Fifty-seven varieties, man—fifty-seven varieties."

"Won't that be a good one to spring on the boys in the morning?" I whispered.

"What are you going to 'spring on the boys in the morning'?"

I looked up to see the night nurse bending over my bed, and we told her the joke, which she enjoyed immensely.

"Now you boys have had enough excitement for one day," she warned us: "I'll get you each a glass of milk, and then I want you to promise me to go right to sleep." And she tucked us in just as our mothers would have done.

"Good night, Palliser."

"Good night, Rosie."

Silence in the ward.

THE END













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